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What is the business of public housing?  
- A new policy for Gothenburg's 'particularly vulnerable areas'

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## Abstract

In 2020, the City Council of Gothenburg declared that no part of the city would remain on the Swedish Police's list of 'particularly vulnerable areas' by the year 2025 and charged the municipal housing company The Framtiden Group with fulfilling this goal. The City Council also instructed the Group to make use of the Gårdsten Model, arguing that it has been successful for developing a 'disadvantaged' neighbourhood. However, it has also been criticised by researchers who claim that it has involved social control strategies. Because of the deregulation and neoliberalisation of national housing policy, the municipal housing companies' goals to act as private businesses can stand in conflict with their social responsibilities. Therefore, the purpose of this master thesis is to analyse Gothenburg's urban development policy discourse in the light of the 2020 municipal budget directive. It asks: 1) How are contradictions between 'economic benefit' and 'social benefit' within Gothenburg's urban development policy discourse 'reconciled' by the Framtiden Group and one of its subsidiaries? 2) How are contradictions between 'social control' and 'social benefit' within Gothenburg's urban development policy discourse 'reconciled' by the Framtiden Group and one of its subsidiaries? 3) How is 'scientific evidence' constructed within Gothenburg's urban development policy discourse? By paying attention to how systemic contradictions are discursively 'reconciled' in four policy documents and eight interviews with company representatives and affiliated researchers, contradictions are contextualised and made visible by utilising theories on the neoliberalisation of Swedish housing, 'social mixing', gentrification and territorial stigmatisation. The analysis shows that the discourse constructs theories that promote increased social control as 'scientific evidence' and that future renovations might put tenants at risk of displacement. The 'particularly vulnerable areas' are constructed as 'disorderly' within the discourse and methods for increased social control are justified by their contribution to perceived safety.

Keywords: Housing, Neoliberalisation, Displacement, Hybridity, Stigmatisation, Gentrification

## Introduction, purpose, and research questions

In the budget proposition of 2020, the City Council of Gothenburg declared that no part of the city would remain on the Swedish Police's list of 'particularly vulnerable areas' by the year 2025 and subsequently charged the municipal housing companies (MHCs) with the primary responsibility for fulfilling this goal. The Swedish Police Authority has since 2015

released reports on what they define as ‘vulnerable areas’ in Sweden. These reports have stirred significant media attention, contributing to an intense political and societal debate (Nationella operativa avdelningen, 2017). The reports distinguish between three types of areas, characterised by their ‘degree of vulnerability.’ This vulnerability is defined by how much crime is affecting the local community in areas of low socio-economic status, ultimately resulting in a general unwillingness among citizens in the area to cooperate with the police and therefore making it ‘particularly vulnerable’ (Nationella operativa avdelningen, 2017). The City Council charged the municipal housing parent company, *The Framtiden Group*, with the primary responsibility for ensuring the removal of Gothenburg’s six ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ from the list by 2025 (City of Gothenburg, 2019).

The City Council also instructed the Framtiden Group to make use of the so-called ‘Gårdsten model’, arguing that this model has been historically successful in developing a ‘disadvantaged’ neighbourhood (City of Gothenburg, 2019). However, the Gårdsten model has been criticised from social science researchers, tenants living in the affected neighbourhood of Gårdsten and the Tenant Association (Borelius, 2010; Borelius & Wennerström, 2009; Görfelt, 2018, 2019; Sveriges Radio, 2018). A strategy document has been published by the Framtiden Group (2020b), detailing how the goal of removing the six ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ from the Police list will be reached and discussing how to implement the Gårdsten model in practice.

The directives for MHCs to act as private businesses can stand in conflict with their goals to act socially responsible. In the 1990s, MHCs were made increasingly independent and shaped into market actors and in 2011 the allbo housing law was created, stipulating that MHCs should act according to ‘business principles’ (Grander, 2020, pp. 62–88). However, there are other goals for the MHCs of Gothenburg that promote societal benefit in the ownership directives formulated by the City. In Sweden, the municipalities are responsible for providing ‘good housing for all’ and the MHCs are expected to contribute. As the MHCs of Gothenburg also own most of the city’s rental apartments, they are central actors in the city’s urban restructuring field. The City Council’s mission for the MHCs to accomplish the removal of six ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ from the list is unique, since it is the Swedish Police that defines the problem and reviews the outcome. This new policy will arguably have a great impact on the roughly 120 000 people living in these areas. Research that asks questions about how it affects Gothenburg’s housing policy discourse is highly motivated.

The purpose of this master thesis is *to analyse Gothenburg's urban development policy discourse in the light of the 2020 municipal budget directive*. To be able to fulfil this purpose, I ask:

*How has the MHCs of Gothenburg interpreted the 2020 directive for the City's 'particularly vulnerable areas'?*

*How do the MHCs combine the policy directive for the 'particularly vulnerable areas' with the social and economic responsibilities stipulated by the City and the 2011 housing law?*

In order to answer my main research questions, I have reviewed relevant research, identified knowledge gaps and formulated research sub-questions that specify my main research questions while still being focused on the overarching purpose. My review of previous research has guided me towards theories that contextualise the 'particularly vulnerable areas' as well as urban development policies and governance. I develop a methodology for analysing policy discourse documents and material from eight interviews, with actor that participate in the construction of the policy discourse.

## Previous Research

To be able to answer my questions and subsequently fulfil my purpose, I have reviewed research that focuses on the current state of the allmännyttan<sup>1</sup> since the deregulation of Swedish national housing policy and specifically since the inception of the 2011 Allbo law. I have also reviewed three books that are extensively referred to in the strategy document. The reviewed research discusses how MHCs perceive their social and economic responsibilities, the history of the Gårdsten model, the history of safety work within the allmännyttan and how to 'turn the situation around' in the 'particularly vulnerable areas' of Gothenburg. Guided by my reading of previous research, I have formulated three new sub-questions that narrow my field of inquiry towards contemporary knowledge gaps.

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<sup>1</sup> In line with how Martin Grander (2018, p. 2) does in his doctoral thesis on the state of the public housing sector in Sweden, I will use the terms *allmännyttan*, *public housing* and *MHCs* in parallel in this thesis. *Allmännyttan* is the name for the Swedish model of universal public housing and is made up by around 300 locally governed *MHCs*. The word *allmännyttan* is imbued with meaning since it is composed by the two words 'allmän' (*public*) and 'nyttan' (*benefit*). Since its inception in 1945, the Swedish allmännyttan has had a universal and theoretically all-inclusive approach to provide housing 'for the benefit of everyone'. Therefore 'public housing' isn't an entirely accurate term to describe the allmännyttan.

How MHCs combine business principles with social responsibility

Martin Grander has analysed data from surveys and case study interviews with CEOs and financial managers in nine Swedish MHCs in order to understand which operations they consider to be socially responsible and why (Grander, 2015a). In his analysis, he divides the answers into three analytical levels of social responsibility. The first one is ‘The close social relationship with the tenant’ (*den hyresgästnära sociala relationen*) (Grander, 2015a, pp. 164–166). The work on this level is about establishing a good relationship between the company and its tenants to create customer satisfaction. While this could be regarded as work guided primarily by business principles and not by social responsibility, several of the companies talk about this kind of work in the light of how society has evolved in the last decades. Increased segregation has also brought an increase of social problems and the companies see it as their mission to handle these problems. The second level Grander calls ‘neighbourhood development’ (*områdesutveckling*) (Grander, 2015a, pp. 166–174). The projects on this level are about creating social cohesion in the neighbourhood, and the activities span from projects that let inhabitants grow vegetables and flowers together to projects that aim to support people in getting a job. Job-creating projects are numerous and vary in character (from educational projects and off-time school assistance for kids to for instance creating actual work positions within the company for unemployed locals). These projects often take the form of partnerships between the MHCs and for example civil society organisations, private businesses, or state agencies. The third level is about ‘urban and social development’ (*stads- och samhällsutveckling*) (Grander, 2015a, pp. 175–185). On this level we find how MHCs deal with their role in supplying ‘good housing for all’, for example through construction of new housing or by modifying the existing housing stock and through regulating who is eligible to rent an apartment. MHCs are required by law to supply housing for all groups in society and Grander elaborates on what this means in the often socially segregated cities where these companies operate and argues that it is necessary to focus not only on the ‘disadvantaged’ areas but the whole city in this respect. The companies commit themselves to mixing tenure forms in order to achieve ‘the dense, mixed city’ (*den täta blandstaden*) when building new neighbourhoods. Even though political demand for construction is high, there is very little construction taking place. The primary reason for this, according to the MHCs themselves, is that policy makers do not ensure that it is possible for the companies to carry out the goals that have been set. The small amount of housing that is constructed consists primarily of expensive apartments in more exclusive locations. The

MHCs are generally tougher on who are eligible to rent an apartment than their private counterparts and some municipalities are even trying to get rid of tenants that are dependent on economic welfare. Among the conclusions Grander draws from his analysis is that social urban development projects often are focused on the ‘losing side’ of segregated cities and at the same time, expensive apartments are built in exclusive locations that are not rented out to ‘undesired’ tenants. Also, when talking about social responsibility, the companies primarily mention projects that the author categorizes as ‘neighbourhood development.’ These are also the socially responsible projects that the companies seem to be most willing to calculate profits on (Grander, 2015a, pp. 185–187).

In another chapter of *Nyttan med Allmännyttan*, Grander discusses how municipal housing companies interpret the 2011 allbo law (stipulating that they should act according to ‘business principles’) and if it has had consequences for how they work with social responsibility (Grander, 2015b). In general, the MHCs argue that the new legislation has not had any profound impact on this dimension of their operations. The law also states that MHCs should contribute to the municipalities obligation to provide ‘good housing for all’ but Grander shows that this is often forgotten when the companies themselves talk about taking social responsibility in accordance with business principles. Many of the ownership directives that municipal governments produce for their MHCs state that they should generate a financial return and this because of how the municipalities have interpreted the new law. The demands for financial return influence where and what type of housing that is constructed. This is mainly because of the immediate value decrease that newly constructed properties suffer when they are built in a less attractive area. Grander argues that this is a matter of interpretation as well. If municipal housing companies choose to see construction of housing as an investment that will generate returns in the long term, they can upscale production in areas that need affordable housing.

The safety work of MHCs

Work that focuses on increasing tenants’ feelings of safety is nothing new within the allmännyttan. Since the 1980s, what Ingrid Sahlin defines as the ‘moral commitment’ of Swedish MHCs has shifted from a previous focus on teaching the lower classes good manners and how to act orderly into focusing more on safety work, such as making neighbourhoods safe from crime and disturbances as well as excluding ‘disorderly’ tenants. This more recent type of safety work has gradually increased as the responsibilities for MHCs to provide ‘good housing for all’ have decreased and as MHCs increasingly have been shaped

into economically independent market actors (Sahlin, 2010, pp. 118–119). One example of this is that since 1998, the security for the Framtiden Group's credit loans is no longer vouched for by the municipality but is now instead reliant on its housing stock property values. Sociologist Ulla-Britt Wennerström argues that one cannot analyse the contemporary safety work of Swedish MHCs without relating it to these credit rating processes by external granters and credit institutes. The fact that a large part of the companies' economy is contingent on these credit ratings have contributed to the *allmännytt*a expanding the sphere of safety work to include not only the physical state of properties and apartments, but also measures for increased social control and restrictive policies on who is eligible to rent. This kind of safety work therefore often becomes a part of social mixing efforts to transform or 'uplift' 'problem areas.' In the light of these developments, the social responsibilities for the most vulnerable groups on the housing market appears to be standing in the way of desired neighbourhood transformations (Wennerström, 2010, p. 137,143,152). Thus, the changes in how safety is perceived by MHCs and how tenants' feelings of security are to be increased are illustrious examples of the contradictory relationships between economic and social goals within the *allmännytt*a.

The Gårdsten Model: the question of social control and social commitment

Sociologists Borelius & Wennerström (2009) analyse and discuss the methods of the MHC Gårdstensbostäder in its efforts to transform a disadvantaged suburban district of Gothenburg, and come to the conclusion that, through adopting a wide range of strategies to conserve its dominant position in the field, the company deflected an important aspect of its social responsibility: to contribute to the 'public good.' The authors argue that Gårdstensbostäders situation is unique, since the company was founded to buy up housing stock from two other MHCs in one single district and subsequently develop the area, effectively linking the company's very existence to its mission. Gårdstensbostäders' role as an MHC is contextualised historically, and so is also the social responsibility that has been associated with MHCs. The authors argue that MHCs had their dominant position on the housing market challenged, partly due to political debate on the 'the crisis of MHCs' in the 1980s coinciding with the general neoliberal critique of the welfare state at the time, and partly due to the Swedish Conservative-Liberal government abolishing the state credits granted to them in the 1990s. To defend themselves and their position, they adopted more business-like strategies to be able to compete with private housing companies. A new Ownership Document for all the MHCs in Gothenburg was ratified in 1992 and it stated that MHCs should contribute to the



development of the city, and to strengthening the city's position in the competitive field of city regions. Through document analysis and interviewing, the authors conclude that, while Gårdstensbostäder arguably has done a lot to improve conditions for residents in the district, they have also adopted a range of 'unconventional methods' to reach this goal that have had effects within the community. They have ensured their dominant position in the social field of Gårdsten by employing acts of symbolic violence. Perhaps most importantly, by trying to evict unwanted tenants through unconventional methods, by adopting a policy that allows no new tenants that are on welfare or social security and by only renting out apartments to people from outside of Gårdsten, the authors argue that Gårdstensbostäder has deflected an important aspect of their social responsibility, resulting in a change in what is meant by 'the public good.' Once defined from the position of the working class, 'the public good' is now instead defined from the position of the MHCs and from the position of the City.

In his book *Förorten*, political science professor Peter Esaiasson argues that the solutions for addressing the problems of Swedish 'vulnerable areas' are about getting people who conform to a 'norm of orderliness'<sup>2</sup> (*skötsamhetsnorm*) to move into them and that local MHCs should act as 'credible enforcers' within their neighbourhoods. According to the author, these areas need to become more like the rest of Sweden and to be increasingly perceived 'from the outside' as more positive parts of Sweden. This is mainly achieved by incentivising 'orderly' people to move into the areas and through MHCs ensuring that rules are followed while also exerting punishment for those who break them. Upholding Gårdstensbostäder as a successful credible enforcer, Esaiasson distinguishes between three characteristics of the work the company has engaged in to create order in its operating area: 1) it has taken command over local partnerships instead of working 'flat', 2) it has retaken control over public places and 3) it has been selective regarding who can live in the area through tougher rent policies, by evicting 'disorderly' tenants and by doing ID controls on tenants in order to prevent second-hand renting.

*Samhällsbygget Gårdsten: allmännyttans framtid?* authored by social work professor Tapio Salonen is a case study analysing the progress made by Gårdstensbostäder in Gårdsten since its inception in 1997 (Salonen, 2021). Salonen argues that Gårdstensbostäder shows that it is possible for MHCs to combine 'strict business principles' with social benefit and that it is

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<sup>2</sup> In the first edition of his book, Esaiasson used the term 'people who think Swedish' ('svenskt tänk', my transl.) but was heavily criticised for this. In the second edition, he added a section discussing this criticism and suggested replacing it with 'norm of orderliness'.

possible to learn from it in order to improve other areas where the *allmännyttan* is present. Gårdstensbostäder has been successful through adapting to its local context during a long period of time, and Salonen argues against viewing this dynamic and temporal process as a simplified ‘model’ that can be deployed elsewhere. Instead, he formulates seven principles based on what he argues are historical successful factors of Gårdstensbostäder, hoping they will inspire other actors in similar circumstances. One of these principles is based on how Gårdstensbostäder has maintained a balance between *social control* and *commitment* (Salonen, 2021, p. 181). He argues that **both** the critics of control enforcement and those that embrace it only promote one side of the dual dimensionality of the *local presence* exerted by Gårdstensbostäder. By using the term ‘commitment’, Salonen argues that there has to be a degree of social control exerted by the MHCs and that this control always has to stem out of a commitment towards the local community. (Salonen, 2021, pp. 159–161). This commitment is about *creating a sense of safety, being available at all times, and being helpful in everyday situations* (Salonen, 2021, p. 159,182,183). Doing this contributes to *building relationships with, as well as gaining the trust of, the tenants*.<sup>3</sup>

Previous research shows ambivalence among MHCs and researchers concerning primarily two contradictory relationships: (1) *between social and economic benefit* and (2) *between social control and social benefit*. In the next section, I elaborate on these two topics and formulate new sub-questions. In the third paragraph, I formulate a sub-question concerning the ‘scientific evidence’-discourse constructed within the order of the urban development discourse.

Research questions formulated from reading previous research

Previous research shows how some social projects initiated by MHCs on the level of ‘neighbourhood development’ are favoured over projects on other levels, such as construction of affordable housing. Even though the MHCs acknowledge a responsibility to counteract segregation, construction of affordable housing in wealthier neighbourhoods is practically zero. Instead, efforts to mix neighbourhoods often focus on the ‘disadvantaged’ poorer areas, which might lead to displacement and a lack of access to housing for ‘undesirable’ tenants.

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<sup>3</sup> The way Salonen discusses ‘commitment’ is reminiscent of how MHCs perceive part of their social responsibilities in the book *Nytan med allmännyttan*. Martin Grander argues that this kind of work is about creating customer satisfaction and that it is guided primarily by business principles and not social responsibilities (see p. 5).

The research on MHC board work shows that some board members might identify as loyal to the company first, not the municipal government or the voters, and that many are unwilling to take economic risks to fulfil the needs for new affordable housing. The new strategy for Gothenburg's 'particularly vulnerable areas' is a central text, carrying the potential of restructuring the order of Gothenburg's urban development policy discourse and thus also the potential of affecting the lives of many. In the light of this, and relating to both main research questions, I ask:

*How are contradictions between 'economic benefit' and 'social benefit' within Gothenburg's urban development policy discourse 'reconciled' by the Framtiden Group and one of its subsidiaries?*

Previous research referring to the Gårdsten model reveal great differences in conclusions drawn by different authors regarding the topic of social control. Sahlin and Borelius & Wennerström focus on how Gårdstensbostäder in its quest to transform the neighbourhood of Gårdsten has exerted power and engaged in a 'disciplining' of the inhabitants that have resulted in displacement, exclusion, and subordination. Esaiasson analyses this new social order as a welcome change, describing Gårdstensbostäder as an actor that, above all, has comparably exerted a higher degree of control and he concludes that this is needed in other 'vulnerable areas' of Gothenburg. Salonen argues that while social control is needed, it is neither warranted nor legitimate without 'social commitment'. However, while the term 'social commitment' can be said to encapsulate *some* of the responsibilities towards social benefit that the MHCs of Gothenburg are charged with, the goals for them to *decrease segregation, contribute to the supply of 'good housing for all' and counteract evictions due to 'social transformations' and cost increases* are not discussed (Salonen, 2021; City of Gothenburg, 2021, p. 3; SFS2017:725; SFS2010:879). Furthermore, research focusing on the *discourse of safety* throughout the history of the allmännyttan argues that 'safety' is increasingly invoked in efforts to socially control tenants and neighbourhoods, as well as invoked in mixing efforts to 'uplift' stigmatised areas (Sahlin, 2010; Wennerström, 2010). Increased social control as well as measures to increase safety in Gothenburg's 'particularly vulnerable areas' are included in the strategy. In the light of this, and relating to both main research questions, I ask:

*How are contradictions between ‘social control’ and ‘social benefit’ within Gothenburg’s urban development policy discourse ‘reconciled’ by the Framtiden Group and one of its subsidiaries?*

Two of the academic texts covered in the previous research section are also referred to in the new housing strategy for Gothenburg’s ‘particularly vulnerable areas.’ These are the books *Förorten* by Peter Esaiasson and *Nytan med allmännyttan*, edited by Tapio Salonen. However, other scientific texts and reports that could be said to be of relevance, both in relation to the general mission of the allmännyttan and to the Gårdsten model are not referred to. This raises questions on how the Framtiden Group perceives science and how it relates to scientific texts. In the light of this, and relating to both main research questions, I ask:

*How is ‘scientific evidence’ constructed within Gothenburg’s urban development policy discourse?*

While the issue of social and economic benefit has been a topic for researchers engaging with the allmännyttan for a long time, the new strategy for Gothenburg’s ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ has brought the issue of social control to the fore. However, there are similarities between several of the contributions to this research field that I review: they lack theoretical frameworks that might contribute to understanding and explaining the social processes within the urban development policy discourse. Both the Swedish allmännyttan and the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ cannot be sufficiently analysed unless they are contextualised and situated within their political and historical contexts. Contradictory relations between social/economic benefit and social control/social benefit as well as how ‘science’ as a discourse is constructed within the order of Gothenburg’s urban development policy discourse is heavily influenced by, and to an extent dependent on, meso- and macro scale social processes. To be able to answer my questions and fill the blanks revealed through reviewing previous research, I have turned to theories which describe the neoliberalisation of the Swedish housing sector, the emergence of ‘social mixing’ within urban development policy and how state-led gentrification can be driven not only by the generation economic capital but also by the need for establishing a new social order within a territorially stigmatised area.

## Theory

The *neoliberalisation* of Swedish housing policy has generated geographic social and economic polarisation, both in economic upswing periods and in times of recession and crisis

since the early 1990s. Drawing on David Harvey and Neil Smith, Hedin et al. claim that the accumulation of economic capital is the main driver behind the deregulation of national housing policies (2012). While Christophers (2013) agrees that the neoliberalisation of Swedish housing has been extensive, he argues that the housing sector cannot be described as thoroughly neoliberalised but rather as a *monstrous hybrid*, due to the effects of neoliberalisation processes combined with the effects of the regulations that still remain. The most important of these ‘monstrous’ effects to keep in mind has to do with how construction of new rental apartments nowadays is deemed unviable by developers. The deregulation of the tenant-owned apartment market (contributing to record high prices for urban land) combined with the abolishment of state subsidies for construction of new housing and the persisting Swedish model for rent regulation has contributed to this. Because three of my research questions ask how contradictory relations are ‘reconciled’ within Gothenburg’s local urban development policy, I argue that the concept of monstrous hybridity is useful for analytically describing constructs that are characterised by these contradictory relations, as well as the discursive and material effects that these constructs might produce. However, since Christopher’s definition of neoliberalisation is based on institutional logics (Christophers, 2013, p. 889), I argue that Hedin et al.’s thorough description of the historical policy changes that they attribute to *the neoliberalisation of Swedish housing* (Hedin et al., 2012, pp. 444–446) is more useful for describing some of the particular social and political contexts that contribute to hybridity and its ‘monstrous’ effects. While both concepts will guide my analysis towards understanding and explaining some of the effects within the policy discourse produced by the neoliberalisation of Swedish housing, there are questions as to *how neoliberal policies are made sense of within it* as well. Because of these questions, I have turned to theories on neoliberal governance and the subjects it creates.

Because studying Gothenburg’s local urban development policy discourse involves how specific political solutions to perceived problems in Gothenburg’s housing sector are *rationalised*, turning to Foucault’s theory of *neoliberal governmentality* is motivated (Lemke, 2001). Governmentality (or ‘the art of government’) refers to how governing not only is the defining of a discursive field where the exercise of power is ‘rationalised’, but also how the specific political rationality underpinning government constitutes both the intellectual processing of reality and the proposed solutions to its political problems. By linking ‘governing’ and ‘mentality’ semantically, Foucault argues that it is imperative to analyse this political rationality in order to properly study ‘the technologies of power’, or government. By

expanding on the concept of ‘government’ to not only include the management or control of populations by states or administrations, but also how political rationalities contribute to both ‘the governing of others’ and ‘governing the self’, Foucault argues that the political concept of neoliberalism is more than just a ‘simple’ reduction of the state. Neoliberalism breaks with classic liberalism in two ways; *by inverting the relationship between the state and the economy, leading to the market form serving as the organisational principle for the state and society, and by bringing ‘economic man’, who rationally applies calculations of costs and benefits to all aspects of life, in as the basis for government* (Lemke, 2001, p. 191,197,200). Because of this, neoliberal forms of government not only retains basic functionality but also takes on new tasks through new forms of self-regulation, or *technologies of the self* (Lemke, 2001, p. 201). Neoliberal forms of government render individual subjects (also collectives, associations, etc.) ‘responsible’ for social risks previously under the responsibility of the state (such as poverty, unemployment, or other inequalities) through developing indirect techniques of leading and controlling them. In this perspective, the neoliberal ‘withdrawal of the state’ is possible to decipher as a technique for government. This technique involves *responsibilisation*, or “shifting the regulatory competence of the state onto ‘responsible’ and ‘rational’ individuals” as well as the “[encouragement to] individuals to give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form” (Lemke, 2001, p. 202). Because responsibilising individual subjects constitute a basis for neoliberal governance and provides a ‘rationale’ for neoliberal policy, I argue that it is vital to remain analytically sensitive towards responsibilisation processes within Gothenburg’s local urban development policy discourse.

Another concept that has to do with providing a kind of ‘rationale’ for housing policy is based on the notion of *social mixing*. In referring to research on one of the first neighbourhoods in London to be gentrified, Loretta Lees connects the notions of *social balance* and *social mixing* as ideas and motives expressed by the gentrifiers belonging to the left liberal new middle-class of the time (2008, p. 2450). She argues that the notion of the socially mixed urban community has become an unquestioned gospel in policy discourse and that the reasoning used by the early gentrifiers ‘virtually echo’ in contemporary policy. She defines social mixing as *moving middle-income people into low-income inner-city neighbourhoods* (Lees, 2008, p. 2451). In her review of the research field on social mixing, Lees discusses numerous aspects of mixing policy. Policy arguments for socially mixing neighbourhoods include ‘defending the neighbourhood’ (meaning that since middle-class people are better at securing public resources, mixed neighbourhoods will fare better than

those without middle-class households); ‘money-go-round’ (meaning that mixed neighbourhoods support stronger local economies) and finally the argument that it increases social capital and therefore generates social cohesion and economic opportunity (Lees, 2008, p. 2451). It is a policy language that obscures its goals to gentrify by never using the word ‘gentrification’ and therefore deflects criticism and resistance (Lees, 2008, p. 2452). Another aspect of this obscuring is the formulation of gentrification strategies as a ‘positive public policy tool’ (Lees, 2008, p. 2453). As for the consequences of gentrification and agendas for social mixing, her review shows that social mixing leads to displacement and social segregation, that it is a one-sided strategy seldom advocated in wealthier neighbourhoods and that social mix policy fails to demonstrate how social mixing between diverse neighbourhood groups is going to be achieved. Social mixing was first introduced as a policy in Sweden in 1974 and has remained prevalent within the policy discourse (Holmqvist & Bergsten, 2009). Because this policy is represented as an explicit part of the new strategy for Gothenburg’s ‘particularly vulnerable areas’, examining the specific construction of ‘social mixing’ within the Gothenburg’s local policy discourse constitutes an integral part of this analysis. Because ‘social mixing’ often leads to displacement and social segregation, I have turned to theories that explain gentrification strategies as driven by either the accumulation of economic capital or by the establishing of a new social structure in ‘disadvantaged’ neighbourhoods.

From the perspective of capital accumulation, Neil Smith argues that *gentrification* as a process has evolved from the local to become generalised at a global scale. Whether in its earlier more localized form, or in its socially organised and contemporary global form, gentrification tells the tale of the displacement of working-class residents from urban centres (Smith, 2002, p. 440). Smith argues that in its contemporary form, we can think of gentrification as *generalised*. This generalised form of gentrification is partly a result of the end of liberal urban policy and dovetails with the larger neoliberal class conquest. (Smith, 2002, p. 441). He outlines five interrelated characteristics that make up the generalisation of gentrification: 1) the relative withdrawal of the national state from subsidies, leading to gentrification and the intensification of partnerships between private capital and the local state, 2) the penetration of global finance down to the local neighbourhood level, 3) the neoliberalised and authoritarian *revanchist city* (Smith, 1996) that eliminates opposition and makes the streets safe for gentrification, 4) the outward diffusion of gentrification from the urban centre and 5) the sectoral generalisation of gentrification (while the first wave of gentrification was independent of the public sector and the second wave fully dependent of it,

the generalized third wave results in “a new amalgam of corporate and state powers and practices that has been forged in a much more ambitious effort to gentrify the city than earlier”) (Smith, 2002, pp. 441–443).

Authors Uitermark, Duyvendak & Kleinhans (2007) analyse processes of state-led gentrification in the Netherlands as aimed at creating social order and ‘socially mixing’ areas in order to pacify social tensions. The ongoing project (at the time of publishing the article) of state-led gentrification focuses on ‘disadvantaged neighbourhoods’ in the Netherlands. The authors argue that a discourse on *liveability* is hegemonic to the ongoing restructuring processes. Livability as a discourse refers to the *social balance* and rate of crime within a neighbourhood (Uitermark et al., 2007, p. 125). The authors argue that, while social cohesion and tax revenue is of course interesting for the local government, the creation of social order within the neighbourhood is the real priority of the state-led gentrification processes taking place there. By acknowledging operational goals, and by referring to Wacquants theory on how *advanced marginality* is concentrated in areas that suffer from *territorial stigmatisation*, the authors argue that the liveability discourse emerged out of a new institutional constellation where state actors and housing associations more and more consider gentrification as the only conceivable solution to handling the crises of poor neighbourhoods (Uitermark et al., 2007, pp. 127–128; Wacquant, 2007). I argue that the neoliberalisation of Swedish society in general, and of Swedish housing in particular, paired with the accumulation of advanced marginality and increased territorial stigmatisation of Sweden’s ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ has contributed to a similar institutional constellation in Gothenburg, in which the municipality together with the MHCs are supposed to manage the increasingly frequent crises in the areas. Territorial stigmatisation contributes, through the media and science discourses, to the justifying of ‘special measures’ taken by authorities that deviate from custom. I argue that it is plausible to regard the new strategy for the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ published by the Framtiden Group as characterised by this logic.

## Methodology

### Research Design

My master thesis was initially meant to be a part of a research project called *Renovation and participation: towards an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable Million Program?* headed by my supervisor, Håkan Thörn. During my initial work, he showed me



the new strategy document that the Framtiden Group had released. I found my thesis dislodging from the overarching purpose of the research project as the first questions I formulated were more about how policy is enacted and about economic and social logics within municipal companies, instead of on how tenants are participating in renovation processes. Since then, my thesis has become increasingly independent, although I have taken part of interview data from the project as well as sharing my collected data with it, as our topics remain close to one another.

My research process has followed an *abductive* logic. This logic shares characteristics with both *induction* and *deduction* but also differs from them. An abductive process starts with a single case that is interpreted with theory and then proceeds to alternate between previous research, theory, and empirical facts as they are successively reinterpreted in the light of the others. Abduction also differs from induction and deduction in that it does not only aim to *explain* but also to *understand* (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, pp. 4–5). Reading up on previous research and developing a theory section enabled me to refine my questions and my strategy for sampling new data while at the same time developing my analysis. The analysis process has then informed my use of theory, previous research, methods and so on, until reaching a sufficiently rich descriptive material in order to finalise my analysis and thus answer my questions.

#### Sampling and data collection

I have collected four board documents produced by the Framtiden Group. Three of them outline main operational strategies for the Group's *development areas* (the Group's term for 'particularly vulnerable areas') before the announcement of the new directive by the City Council. All four are listed below with a short description.

1. An 11-page strategy for development areas released in 2019, detailing construction of new housing, conversions of rental apartments, renovations and service (The Framtiden Group, 2019c).
2. A 17-page report on how to achieve a 'mix' of tenure forms in development areas, through conversion of rental apartments into tenant-owned ones and construction. The document has been authored by a workgroup consisting of board members from the parent company and all subsidiary MHCs and was released in 2019 (The Framtiden Group, 2019a).
3. A 7-page description of guidelines for renovations and maintenance, released in 2019 (The Framtiden Group, 2019b).

4. The fourth document is the strategy, describing how to remove the development areas from the Police list. It is a 47-page document and was released in 2020, approximately six months after the City Council's budget directive (The Framtiden Group, 2020b).

The sampling of these documents has been based on different *criteria*. Firstly, they focus on operations in 'particularly vulnerable areas.' Secondly, they encompass the four main operative functions of the Group (construction, conversions, renovations, and service/maintenance). The collection of the strategy document is a case of *intensity sampling*, due to its character of being the primary textual representation of how the City Councils directive has been interpreted, thus highlighting its importance for answering my questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 115). The strategy document is also related to the other documents explicitly, in the text (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 6). All in all, these texts, along with some of the other texts they invoke (scientific texts, the allbo legislation, ownership directives, the municipal budget), constitute a sample size and shape that is representative of Gothenburg's urban development discourse, while still conforming to the scope and timeframe of a master thesis.

Because my sub-questions are about how ambivalence is 'reconciled' and how 'scientific evidence' is constructed within the urban development discourse, I have performed semi-structured interviews with company representatives and board members as well as researchers. I have developed interview guides, motivated by several reasons. Because I have been guided by both theory, previous research and the initial analysis in my sampling strategy, the semi-structured approach has enabled me to focus the interviews on certain themes and questions while also maintaining a flexibility and openness towards the unexpected. Because of the limited time for carrying out interviews within the time frame of a master thesis, pre-constructed interview guides also enabled me to be somewhat more prepared for intense interviewing, as I contacted many potential interview candidates under a short period of time. During the process of contacting interviewees, my sampling strategy transformed from focusing on *maximum variation* and certain criteria to more of a 'vertical' design, focusing on one MHC as a *critical case*. I started out by contacting board members and CEOs of all the MHCs, including the Framtiden Group parent company. Eventually, a vertical pattern emerged as I realised that I had three interviews on different levels within one specific MHC. These are the interview persons:

John – an employee at the parent company of the Framtiden Group

Mikael – an employee at the parent company of the Framtiden Group

Fredrik – a board member of the parent company of the Framtiden Group

Evelina – a board member of the subsidiary MHC

Jakob – an employee in the subsidiary MHC

Mattias – an employee in the subsidiary MHC

Martin Grander – researcher at Malmö University in Urban Studies and affiliated with the Framtiden Group

Peter Esaiasson – professor at University of Gothenburg in Political Science and affiliated with the Framtiden Group

All the interviews have been performed with the intent of keeping each of them around one hour long. Because I have had to perform them during the Covid-19 pandemic, all of them have been done digitally, as well as recorded, with Zoom. Altogether, the interviews clock in at 7,6 hrs of recorded audio. They have been transcribed by two different transcribers, paid for by the research project *Renovation and participation: towards an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable Million Program* led by my supervisor, Håkan Thörn and have resulted in a total of 64,370 of transcribed words.

All quotes and references to documents and interviews are translated by me from Swedish to English, in part by using the translation dictionary by the Swedish National Encyclopaedia.

Discursive ambivalence and CDA

Contradictory institutional logics are constantly negotiated and renegotiated by actors on the Swedish field of urban restructuring. Because of this, a key focus in my analysis method is the articulation and suppression of conflict, or *discursive ambivalence* (Thörn & Svenberg, 2016, p. 598). Ambivalence related to contradictions and conflicts within the allmännyttan might be read as *attempts to 'reconcile' certain systemic contradictions and conflicts* that define the field of urban restructuring, dominated by the discourse of 'urban development' (Thörn & Svenberg, 2016, p. 598). Because discursive ambivalence relates to how texts and actors aim to negotiate or 'reconcile' systemic contradictions, I argue that *focusing on moments of reflexivity within actors as they are asked questions about contradictory relationships within Gothenburg's urban development policy discourse* might provide insight on how these contradictory relations relate to social and political contexts. I also argue that asking these questions might provide insight on how hybridity is constructed within the policy discourse and the material effects it might have. Because the interview subjects are company representatives and affiliated policy researchers, I have aimed to adopt a critical

perspective towards the reflections expressed in the interviews, while also remaining sensitive to their social position within this hierarchy and considering ethical questions that relate to them.

Discourse analysis is broadly used within many disciplines and the concept encompasses a vast number of different perspectives which might render it rather vague. Jørgensen & Phillips put forward a basic definition: discourse as *a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)* (2002, p. 1). The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the way urban restructuring in Gothenburg is discursively constructed, which requires descriptive accounts. But, in order to *explain why* it is constructed in a particular way, the analysis must be sensitive to how different contexts influence discourse. When choosing a method of analysis, I have been inspired by Norman Faircloughs *critical discourse analysis* (CDA), since it acknowledges that other aspects of the social also constitutes discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 61). Adopting a stance that incorporates theoretical perspectives of both structuralist and poststructuralist theory, CDA does not regard discourse as purely constitutive but rather claims that it is in a dialectical relationship with other social dimensions such as the structure of the political system or institutions such as the family (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 62). In this way, discourse not only contributes to the shaping and reshaping of social structure but also reflects it. CDA is ‘critical’ in the sense that it aims to shed light on how unequal power relations contribute to the maintenance of the social world by influencing *discursive practice*, or the production and consumption of texts (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). I argue that this aspect of CDA is fruitful for analysing the systemic contradictions that define the field of urban restructuring.

My analysis can be regarded as a kind of two-stage process. In the first stage, I have analysed board documents, guided primarily by the sub-questions concerning conflicting discourses. The discursive ambivalence read from the texts have shaped the main parts of my interview guides. This ambivalence, I argue, is the result of attempts by policy makers to ‘reconcile’ contradictory or conflictual relations that defines the field of urban restructuring, dominated by the policy discourse of ‘urban development.’ My interviews with the eight actors, all of them contributing to the constitution of the urban development policy discourse, could be seen as ‘interventions’ or ‘calls for reflection’ with the purpose of rendering the contradictions or conflicts more visible. Both Martin Grander and Peter Esaiasson are both involved in research projects that are funded by the Framtiden Group. Because of this, I argue that they are actors contributing to the construction of the policy discourse in a sense that is

analytically comparable to the other actors. Since one of my main questions is about how the Framtiden Group has interpreted the 2020 directive, I have also aimed to remain sensitive of other aspects in the material that could spark my interest. Thus, the sub-question concerning how ‘scientific evidence’ is constructed within the discourse was a result of this reading. This part of the analysis led to my review of the book *Förorten* and adding it to the previous research section. It also spurred me into contacting researchers mentioned in the strategy and asking them for interviews. Furthermore, the book *Samhällsbygget Gårdsten* was released during the process of writing the thesis, which led to it being reviewed and added as well. In the second stage, I have interviewed company representatives and affiliated researchers, guided by questions formulated out of the first-stage analysis as well as previous research.

#### Ethical considerations

Because my purpose is to *analyse Gothenburg’s urban development policy discourse in the light of the 2020 municipal budget directive*, I am as a researcher not only engaging with the political issue of housing in general, but also the politics affecting the stigmatised and marginalised areas of Gothenburg. This entails inquiry and analysis which is sensitive to how power relations affect this discourse as well as the highly stratified reality of many of the inhabitants in the affected areas.

The four company employees in the parent company and subsidiary have been anonymised in this thesis with new names. I have produced a code key for these names, kept in a secure and different location from the transcribed interviews. I have aimed to not disclose of any personal information that might have been recorded during interviews in the thesis text.

The researchers have not been anonymised, because it would be practically impossible since they are interviewed partly in their capacity as researchers invoked by the strategy text. They have been informed of this and both have agreed to give me consent to carry out the interviews on the grounds that I check direct quotes with them before publishing the thesis.

## Analysis

The construction of ‘scientific evidence’ within the policy discourse

In the strategy document released by The Framtiden Group, a significant portion of the text is devoted to reviewing research that might help the MHCs in developing working methods. Also frequent in the strategy text are claims related to this review of research as well as presentations of possible methods. There are many references to theories and research. The question of how the social responsibilities of MHCs might be combined with the business principles stipulated by the allbo law is discussed in reference to the book *Nyttan med allmännyttan* under the rubric ‘Economy’ in the end of the document (Salonen, 2015; The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 25). In the first ten pages, which might be described as a kind of ‘problem formulation’, a background is developed, and the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ are problematised and defined (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, pp. 7–10). After this comes a section reviewing previous research. In this part of the analysis, I will examine how Gothenburg’s local urban development discourse constructs ‘scientific evidence.’ I argue that this construction relies primarily on *how* the strategy text invokes other texts, as well as style and structure. As I have mentioned, the structure of the first ten pages resembles that of a scientific report. The first two academic texts referred to within the ‘review’ section are one book and a report, both referred to as historical overviews of the efforts, projects and investments that have been made in these areas since the 1960s (Nilvall et al., 2020; Roelofs & Salonen, 2019). The strategy text argues in reference to these two works that the neighbourhoods have been ‘vulnerable’ since they were constructed and that ‘area development’ (the Framtiden Group’s own term for working with decreasing segregation in these areas) efforts, even though having the goal of decreasing segregation, have failed because segregation and inequality has instead increased due to changes on a macro level in society (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 11). After this comes a new section with the rubric ‘Strategies and efforts that might work.’ This section starts with a paragraph that is illustrative of how ‘scientific evidence’ is constructed:

Put together, current research and experiences paint a gloomy picture for the possibilities of succeeding with area development. When looking back through history, many things speak of a difficult mission and that it will take a lot to turn the development around in a particularly vulnerable area. At the same time, there are examples of theories about working efforts and strategies, in criminology and political science among others. The Framtiden Group has also through its work in Gårdsten its own experience of how area development can be successful in moving an area in the right direction on the police’s list (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 13).

The style of this quote is formal and disinterested, and this reflects other passages that discuss theory and research. It does not include a narrator ('we' 'I', 'us' etc.) and links the main argument to presupposed 'conclusions' drawn in the research that has been reviewed. The argument is that some strategies or efforts *work* while others *do not*. Something that 'works' or 'does not work' in relation to the strategy's goals is constructed as 'scientific evidence.'

The two first theories that represent 'working efforts and strategies' in this section are both zero-tolerance theories. The first one is the FAS theory, developed by the Swedish National Council for Crime and based on individual police workers experience in the field and is about police and 'other societal actors' increasing their presence in a 'socially vulnerable' area and exerting zero tolerance towards disturbances, misdemeanours and petty crimes such as illegal graffiti, so that inhabitants might gain more trust for the judicial system and feel more safe (Brottsförebyggande rådet, 2016, pp. 129–133). The second one is Broken Windows, a theory that greatly inspired first New York City's zero-tolerance efforts in the 1980s and 1990s and later making an impression on many other policy makers internationally (Kelling & Wilson, 1982). Broken Windows is based on the visual metaphor of the broken window: if a broken window doesn't get fixed and the perpetrator isn't caught, this will lead to all windows being broken. As a method, it stipulates zero tolerance against misdemeanours, disturbances, and petty crimes in order to create a perception of social control (Franzén et al., 2016, pp. 283–284). As such it seems to share similarities with the FAS theory, albeit not as focused on the Swedish context. The third text referred to is the book *Förorten* by political science professor Peter Esaiasson.

John, and Mikael, two of the interviewees who work at the parent company talk about how a considerable effort has been invested in this knowledge review and that it represents a novel approach by the Framtiden Group when comparing to earlier policy documents it has released (The Framtiden Group, 2019c). When I ask John about the process of selecting relevant theories, he says that the Gårdsten Model and previous experiences from property management might have guided this work more than what is expressed in the strategy text:

It could be perceived as, and it might also *be* a little ad hoc. [...] I think a whole lot of what is connected for example to criminology and theories, that has been produced in dialogue with the police. [...] What does one know that *works*? What does one feel that one knows from Gårdsten and the like? Then, efforts have been made to confirm this with theoretical references. [...] And Broken Windows and the FAS theory and all that, that's stuff that *the police* are using. (John, p. 16)

When I ask Mikael about the process of selecting theories, he says that the City Council's goal for removing the 'particularly vulnerable areas' from the police's list has been a decisive factor:

[...] There is a lot more research and more knowledge that indeed would have been relevant, that one could have imagined being in the strategy. [...] One needs to take things in all the time, depending on what question is being worked with. [...] I think that, and especially when references are being made to Broken Windows and the FAS theory...this City Council-goal is the basis for the strategy, that we shall have no particularly vulnerable areas in 2025. It is the police's definition and it's pretty natural that one looks at the things that the police is leaning against, and they have an active practice based on the FAS theory that they operationalise. It's pretty given that one needs to relate to that in some way. (Mikael, p. 4)

Both of these reflexive moments contribute to the understanding of how 'scientific evidence' has been constructed within the urban development policy discourse. Theories or strategies grounded in research that 'works' or 'not works' are explicitly linked to the goal of removing the 'particularly vulnerable areas' in Gothenburg from the police list. As I will show in the part of the analysis that examines contradictory relations between 'social control' and 'social benefit', this goal is associated with the aspect of increasing the perceived safety in the areas. This is something that Fredrik, the board member in the parent company, also reflects upon when I ask him how research has been reviewed in the strategy:

[...] There is way too little research in Sweden today on how we also fight criminality and criminal gangs. [...] This 'stop shooting'-strategy (*sluta skjut*, my transl.) for example that has been tested in Malmö, is that kind of tool that the police has been using which is now going to be tried out in other cities. At the same time, we know that the police does not have a lot of research about different ways of working. [...] But I think that that they have been used as tools and that they are regarded as [methods] that might work (Fredrik, p. 9).

Some of these theories and methods have been heavily criticised by other social scientists. The Broken Windows theory has long been controversial, as researchers find little to no empirical support for the notion that disorder leads to serious crime (Kramer, 2012, p. 232). The book *Förorten* has been criticised for ignoring decades of relevant research, on for example suburban culture and the methods of the Gårdsten Model, a fact that the author upholds as a quality (Thörn et al., 2021; Sernhede, 2019; Esaiasson, 2019).

I have also asked the two researchers affiliated with the Framtiden Group to reflect on how research is used in the strategy text. Martin Grander talks about how bits and pieces have been selected from the book *Nyttan med allmännyttan* he was involved with in writing, and he is critical of what he argues is a lack of an overall or general picture when it comes to how the strategy refers to research:



[The Framtiden Group] takes support in the idea that there is no conflict between social responsibility and business principles [...]. But these are of course a couple of paragraphs that have been picked out from a whole book. There are quite a lot of contributions in the book that discusses this, discussing advanced and complicated ideas about business principles and social responsibility, in that sense it is clear something has been picked out that is in line with the strategy. However, there was something that made me jump in my seat a little...it was Sveriges Allmännyttan. At the top of page twenty-six it is written that “Efforts that generate big deficits cannot be motivated with social responsibility or branding.” [...] That has been picked out from their guidance [to MHCs]. But I think that it contradicts what is written above a little bit. (Martin Grander, p. 4)

[...] There are decades of research on the supply of housing, on vulnerable areas, on criminality, on stigmatisation, on neighbourhood effects, both in the Swedish and the international context. I could imagine that a better overall picture of where current research is regarding these issues might be more interesting [...] (Martin Grander, p. 5)

Grander is the only actor in my interviews that actively contests the construction of ‘scientific evidence’ which other actors co-constitute. He talks about ‘scientific evidence’ as something more complex, and something that encompasses many different fields of inquiry.

During our interview, Peter Esaiasson talks about how the Swedish Police’s work with defining ‘vulnerable areas’ have been decisive, both for his own work with the book but also for enabling a shared ‘concept of reality’ with the Framtiden Group:

[...] If one ingests [the definition for ‘particularly vulnerable areas’] then one will think about it differently, that’s what I think at least. Then you’re thinking: “All right, the absolutely most important thing that can happen now is to make the area function like the rest of Sweden in these regards. [...] This is the background as to why Framtiden – I think that Framtiden shares approximately this concept of reality. I don’t know but I think that’s the way it is. And it is that aspect, that analysis, that they appreciated in my book (Peter Esaiasson, p. 3)

When asked to reflect on how the strategy relates to his book, he argues that it is legitimising already existing policy:

[...] I don’t think it is this analysis that has made Framtiden – one doesn’t spend 11 billion crowns on a program because you’ve read something in a book [...]. Often, when it comes to policymaking one knows approximately where one wants to go. And then one looks for indicators or reasons to be able to go there. So, in that case I think more that – that my book has a legitimising function than actually affecting policy (Peter Esaiasson, p. 6)

By referring to a having a shared ‘concept of reality’ with The Framtiden Group, Esaiasson argues that the text relates to him, not for the conclusions drawn in his book, but because it legitimises already existing policy. In this way, I argue that Esaiasson also is contributing to the construction of ‘scientific evidence’ within the policy discourse as something that ‘works’ or ‘not works’ in relation to the strategy’s goal of removing the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ from the list of the Swedish Police.

Contradictory relations between social and economic benefit

The neoliberalisation of Swedish national housing policies in the last three decades have made a profound impact on Swedish MHCs. They have been effectively cut off from economic support previously in the form of for example state subsidies and through the municipalities' vouching for the security of their loans (Hedin et al., 2012, p. 444; Wennerström, 2010, p. 137). MHCs were, as a consequence of the 2011 allbo law, first expected to be economically self-sufficient, now many municipalities require their housing companies to generate financial returns (Grander, 2015b). These developments can be viewed as a specific form of neoliberal responsabilisation directed towards the MHCs, as they are tell-tale signs of how the relationship between the state and the economy has been inverted, leading to the market form serving as the organisational principle for municipal housing. With the extensive deregulation of the welfare state, 'new' neoliberal forms of government have rendered MHCs responsible for social risks previously under the responsibility of the state, such as unemployment, segregation, crime, as well as the consequences of the housing shortages in the urban centres in the form of homelessness and overcrowdedness (Lemke, 2001, pp. 200–201; Sahlin, 2010; Hyresgästföreningen, 2020). The allbo law can be regarded as one example of this kind of 'new' form of government, as it embodies the increasing tension between the social responsibilities of MHCs and the demand for them to act according to 'business principles.' (SFS2010:879).

The current ownership directives for the Framtiden Group stipulates that the MHCs are to generate a financial return that is comparable to other businesses, at a minimum of three per cent per year (City of Gothenburg, 2021, p. 4). The new strategy document discusses how to achieve economic benefit and generate returns:

[...] The company should always act according to the company's best interest and only make investments and efforts that are considered profitable. It is about profitability in the long run, there are no demands to make profits in the short run. [...] Efforts that generate big losses cannot be motivated with social responsibility or a strengthened brand. (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, pp. 25–26)

The strategy text also states that:

Our assessment is that the efforts demanded by the strategy for the ['particularly vulnerable areas'] are motivated according to business principles [...]. Besides the economic benefit, there are other explicit benefits with the strategy. The goal is that no citizen in Gothenburg should have to live in a particularly vulnerable area and that conditions are good for all who grow up, live and work in these areas (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 26).

Below this paragraph is a circle, divided into three equally big parts. The three parts are named *tenant benefit*, *social benefit*, and *economic benefit* (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 26). While there are other parts in the strategy text that tries to ‘reconcile’ the contradictions of economic and social benefit, this is notably the most explicit part.

Hybrid renovations

I will now turn from this more general ‘reconciling’ of social benefit and economic benefit in the strategy, into focusing on a specific effort in the strategy text that is supposed to generate a social benefit while at the same time conforming to ‘business principles’: *affordable renovations*. In a section describing the different aspects which constitute the Gårdsten Model, the strategy text mentions ‘gentle renovating’ (*varsam renovering*) and that the MHC Gårdstensbostäder historically has received extra funding for reparations (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 15). This extra funding has contributed towards what Gårdstensbostäder calls ‘gentle renovating.’ Through the concept of ‘gentle renovating,’ they have successfully renovated apartments in Gårdsten without any increase in rent levels (Salonen, 2021, p. 136). There is not much indicating that this concept will be implemented in the strategy for ‘particularly vulnerable areas’. This is primarily due to the new *Guidelines for renovations and maintenance*, adopted in 2019, that the strategy document explicitly relates to (The Framtiden Group, 2019b, 2020b, p. 6). This guideline document describes how renovations are to be carried out in the future and is responding to a specific section in the ownership directives that describes the need for renovations in the million-program areas:

Many apartments need reparations [...]. Tenants are to be involved in a dialogue in relation to reparations and restructuring. The ambition is that no tenant should have to leave their homes because of social transformations and cost increases (City of Gothenburg, 2021, p. 3).

The new guideline document from 2019 relate to this formulation (it existed in the previous iteration of the ownership directive as well), stating that in order to see to it that no tenant becomes displaced, *twenty per cent of the Group’s future renovations are to be performed with little to no rent increases* (The Framtiden Group, 2019b, p. 4). In order to understand and explain the particularities of how these guidelines might be implemented and how contradictions between social and economic benefit seemingly might be ‘reconciled’ in Gothenburg’s urban development discourse, I draw on Brett Christophers characterisation of the Swedish housing system as a *neoliberalised monstrous hybrid*, (Christophers, 2013, p. 887; Hedin et al., 2012). The hybrid character of the Swedish housing system carries a ‘distinct monstrosity’ in that it simply does not ‘work’ as it should, especially for the groups

who are most disadvantaged and socio-economically vulnerable (Christophers, 2013, p. 887). I will here attempt to describe the contradictory relationship between economic and social benefit within what I argue is a hybrid model for future renovations. I also argue that this model carries the potential of *responsibilising* tenants, as it renders tenants ‘responsible’ for their neighbours’ possibilities to remain in their homes, despite these homes being subjected to renovations. I argue that this is done by a shifting of the regulatory competence of the municipality, onto ‘responsible’ and ‘rational’ individuals and by encouraging individuals to give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form (Lemke, 2001, p. 202)

When I asked the interviewees about the ‘20/80-model’ for renovations, it became clear to me that *how these twenty percent are supposed to be selected is up to the individual MHCs*. According to one of them, there is talk in one MHC of only selecting people on retirement as eligible for affordable renovations. However, the subsidiary MHC some of my interviewees are associated with has developed an entirely different model for selecting tenants. Jakob, and the board manager Evelina, talk about how they have carried out a pilot project in which the new guidelines have been implemented. Tenants in an apartment house in a ‘particularly vulnerable area’ were given four different renovating options. The first option was an affordable basic renovation without an increase in standard, while the three others were more expensive:

What was new in this project, enabling us to go down to zero crowns on the most affordable option while still maintaining a five per cent investment return, was that we increased the price a little on the other three options. So, if you’re choosing a more expensive bathroom or kitchen or both you’re really paying a bit *more* than the actual cost, and that extra money goes to sponsoring your neighbours that chose the most affordable option. (Evelina, pp. 12-13)

What generates returns is the rent total, the total rent increase. That way you can increase the rent a little less for some people and a bit more for someone else [...] (Jakob, p. 9)

Both interviewees explicitly describe the hybrid character of the new 20/80-model in how it relates to both the ambition that “no tenant should have to leave their homes because of [...] cost increases” and the demand for generating an investment return (City of Gothenburg, 2021, pp. 3–4). While these quotes reflect some of the problems with how efforts that are supposed to generate social benefit can become dominated by the demands for economic benefit, it also points to how tenants can be *responsibilised*, in this particular case through the idea that they are ‘sponsoring their neighbours’ economically (Lemke, 2001). In order to understand how this might be a ‘shifting of the regulatory competence of the municipality onto individuals’, it is important to account for the specific deregulations related to

renovations that have occurred in Sweden. In the beginning of the 1990s, the funding from the state to MHCs with the purpose to aid with costs for the stocks of vacant ‘surplus’ housing that had been produced during the million program was cut. At the same time, the tax reform of 1991 removed the option for MHCs to reserve economic capital in tax exempted funds devoted to maintenance. These changes led to an underfinancing of future renovations, even though the monthly rent paid by tenants is supposed to cover for reparations (Grander, 2020, pp. 66–67; Hedin et al., 2012, pp. 445–446). In the light of these developments, the tenants in this hybrid 20/80-model are rendered responsible for the welfare of their neighbours. The four options, out of which three means an increased standard of the apartment, can also be seen as part of the responsabilisation, as the model encourages tenants to ‘upgrade’ their homes in an entrepreneurial form.

Both Evelina and Jakob say that the subsidiary managed to achieve a twenty per cent share of affordable renovations in the pilot project for the 20/80-model. There are, however, good reasons to argue that the need for affordable renovations exceed the capacity of the model. Hedin et al. show that the neoliberalisation of national and municipal policy has resulted in a long-term economic disinvestment in these areas, contributing to increased social polarisation in the city of Gothenburg (Hedin et al., 2012, p. 455). This finding is accentuated by contemporary research arguing that the need for affordable renovations is higher than what is addressed by housing policies. In the early 2010s, the term ‘renoviction’ surfaced among Swedish critical researchers as well as in Swedish media. This term pointed towards the fact that more and more people in Sweden are being displaced due to high rent increases as their apartments are subjected to renovations (Polanska & Richard, 2018, p. 419). Large stocks of rental housing in the million-program areas are nowadays in great need of reparations. The rent levels for these stocks are negotiated between landlords and local tenant associations, in accordance with the so-called ‘use-value rent system’ (*bruksvärdesprincipen*), and normally large rent increases are not permitted. However, landlords have found a way around this system. By *taking measures to increase the standard of an apartment* at the same time as they are doing routine replumbing, the landlords can charge much more (Polanska & Richard, 2018, p. 420). In a report released by the Tenant Association, the authors approximate that between thirty to forty per cent of the tenants in the ‘particularly vulnerable area’ of Angered will be forced to move if rents are increased with twenty-five to fifty per cent (Bergenstråhle & Palmstierna, 2016). Another report by the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning in 2014 states that the probability that a tenant will move is increased by 1,8 when

their apartment is subjected to renovations. People with lower incomes move more often when subjected to renovations (Jonsson, 2014).

That tenants with low incomes might be affected by this policy in a negative way is reflected in my interviews as well. Fredrik, the board member of the Framtiden Group, avoids discussing directly how the MHCs are supposed to select tenants for affordable renovations, as well as how the new guidelines might cause concern and worries among them:

I: [...] I'm thinking, spontaneously, when I've read about these...these renovations that are to be made...it's – it feels as though it could potentially create some worry.

F: Mm, definitely. Yes.

I: That [the tenants] know that some people can come to be selected for cost-free renovations and such.

F: Mm.

I: What do you think about how one could do that?

F: [...] It's very much up to the subsidiaries to carry that out. But I would like to say that one needs to engage in the Tenant Association also, in order to take that fight as tenants in the allmännyttan. [...] We as politicians can't sit around and choose, but there has to be some kind of dialogue [between] tenants [...] and the subsidiaries plus the Tenant Association.

[...]

I: Would you have wanted to increase the share of affordable renovations?

F: [...] I think it's straight up difficult to say. I absolutely...would have wanted it, theoretically, but I know that things cost money and then one wonders what the cost will be. Where is the money coming from? (Fredrik, pp. 16-17)

Even though Fredrik acknowledges that there are potential risks with this model, he deflects the responsibility by actively shifting it towards the tenants, who according to him should decide for themselves and negotiate with the subsidiaries. His reluctance to elaborate on the subject could indicate that the MHCs do not know how to communicate the 20/80-model. When I asked Evelina about if the company informed the tenants that were involved in the pilot project for the model, she expresses a similar ambivalence towards the topic:

I don't know what they knew. I guess the CEO could answer that and probably also what the tenants thought about it. I don't think we're going to keep it secret in the coming projects. Nevertheless, we will have to discuss this with the Tenant Association when we negotiate the exact sums for each alternative. I don't think we will push it in our communications with each tenant. (Evelina, PM)

The reflexive accounts from both these interviewees illustrate how the hybridity of a model such as this causes effects that are hard to manage for the MHCs – even on the level of

communication towards the tenants. They also reflect how responsibility is shifted downwards, first from the municipality to the MHC and then to the tenants.

Social mixing, segregation, and construction of new housing

According to Lees (2008, p. 2451), ‘social mixing’ is used as a *positive public policy tool* within the western urban development discourse, and this use contributes to obscuring the language of gentrification. It is also constructed as a moralistic discourse that deflects criticism through the notion that ‘mixing’ is about helping the poor. As Lees (2008, p. 2452) rhetorically asks: “It is difficult to be for gentrification, but who would oppose social mixing?”. The notion of ‘social mixing’ is a part of the new strategy as well. The primary ‘problem’ that ‘mixing’ is supposed to solve in the strategy document is what is called ‘structural housing segregation’ or simply ‘segregation’ (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 4,11). In the Group’s policy report on achieving a ‘balanced’ mix of tenure forms there is ambivalence concerning mixing and the issue of segregation. The text states that “construction of new housing constitute the Group’s main strategy [for mixing]” (The Framtiden Group, 2019a, p. 6). Even though it argues that “housing which differs in size, type, tenure form and price must be offered in all parts of Gothenburg”, it primarily discusses how to ‘mix’ areas that have a high share of rental apartments (The Framtiden Group, 2019a, p. 3). This ambivalence is reflected in my interviews as well. When I ask Fredrik, the board member in the parent company, he says that while he knows there are plans to build rental apartments in areas that are wealthier, it is harder to do because “it costs a lot and has to go through both the Property Management Committee and the City Council” (Fredrik, p. 14). When asked about mixing, Evelina, the board member in the MHC, says that while the idea to engage in mixing is basically a good one, she highlights that it is difficult to achieve in more attractive middle- or upper-class areas, for several reasons:

We need to build more rental apartments in [more wealthy areas]. [...] And then we also need to build more *affordable* rental apartments. And that is a...a difficult challenge perhaps, the way rent gets set nowadays. [...] We are facing that challenge and well we do not really have an answer yet on how to do this. Right now, we are fighting alliansen and the Democrats to be able to build any apartment blocks *at all*. (Evelina p. 11)

The interviewees point in part to the economic constraints that Swedish MHCs are facing since the abolishment of the national housing policy and the removal of state subsidies to new construction of housing in the early 1990s. Housing was to be regarded as a commodity not distinguishable from others (Hedin et al., 2012, p. 444). Combined with the increased pressure on MHCs to act according to ‘business principles’ and the introduction of the

‘presumption rent model’<sup>4</sup>, it has been near impossible for them to construct affordable rental housing. Another contribution to this is the fact that land prices have risen to record levels ever since the deregulation of pricing for tenant-owned (*bostadsrätt*) apartments in 1968 (Christophers, 2013, p. 903). I argue that these deregulations and policy changes have contributed to a *neoliberalised hybrid construct* within the policy discourse (Christophers, 2013; Hedin et al., 2012). This hybrid construct aims to decrease housing segregation through construction of new housing. In the strategy document, the plans for construction of new housing reads like this:

We also have prepared for investing approximately 7.5 billion crowns in existing stock, and in construction of new housing in [the particularly vulnerable areas]. [...] Investments for construction in new housing will result in approximately 3 000 new homes can be built in [the particularly vulnerable areas] during [2020-2030] (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 24).

There is no explicit detailing in this paragraph about the distribution of tenure forms in the housing that is to be constructed. However, when I ask John about this, he reflects on what he considers are some of the details of this part of the strategy:

[The Framtiden Group] wishes to increase the tenure form variance. Because now in these areas we have a very strong rental apartment dominance. So, in that sense the other tenure forms are more emphasized (John, p. 10).

To sum up, I argue that the hybrid character of this strategy is two-fold. The demand for the MHCs to act according to ‘business principles’, contradicts *both* the specific policy goal to ‘socially mix’ wealthier areas and the more general goal to ‘decrease segregation’. These contradictions are contributing to 1) a minimal construction of affordable new rental apartments in wealthier areas and 2) a dominance of tenant-owned apartments in the plans for construction of new housing in the ‘particularly vulnerable areas.’ These two aspects of hybridity within the policy discourse contribute heavily to a one-sided focus on ‘the losing side’ of the segregated city.

Contradictory relations between social control and social benefit

There are many references to measures that are supposed to increase safety, as well as social control strategies, in new the strategy document published by the Framtiden Group. Some of them are mentioned in the part of the analysis that is devoted to how ‘scientific evidence’ is constructed within the policy discourse. This part of the analysis, however, is about

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<sup>4</sup> The presumption rent model is effective since 2006 and basically gives property owners the right to deviate from the regulated use-value rent negotiations when deciding the rent for newly constructed housing. This results in much higher rents, which are excepted from the regulatory use-value model for up to 15 years. See (Sveriges Allmännyttan, n.d.).



contradictory relations between ‘social control’ and ‘social benefit’ and how they are ‘reconciled’ in the strategy text. In order to expose these contradictory relations, I will first describe and discuss the notion of ‘safety’ in the strategy text and argue that it is possible to view its construction in the discourse as referring to social control strategies. Through this logic of analysis, I will show how contradictory relations between ‘social control’ and ‘social benefit’ are ‘reconciled’ through the construction of ‘safety’ within the policy discourse.

In the introductory part of the strategy document there are references to, and discussions about, what makes areas ‘vulnerable’ as well as the effects of ‘vulnerability’. The notion of ‘safety’ is a key aspect for understanding how the strategy defines ‘vulnerable areas’:

[a vulnerable area is] a geographically demarcated area that is characterised by a low socioeconomic status and where criminals are affecting the local community. [...]

The effect of this is that the residents in the area are experiencing unsafeness, which in turn leads to a decreased willingness to report crimes and partake in the legal process (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 8).

As demonstrated by the police definition above, particularly vulnerable areas are characterised by a low socioeconomic status. Similarly bad socioeconomic conditions exist in many areas in Sweden, although a limit number of these develop into particularly vulnerable areas. That an area evolves negatively towards becoming a particularly area [sic] is the result of a process of criminalisation that has a widespread effect on the local community and the living environment (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 9).

This definition is illustrative of why the strategy text is so highly devoted to the topic of safety. Increased perceived safety in residents will, according to the definition above, increase their willingness to cooperate with the police and the judicial system, thus also bringing the areas closer to being removed from the list of the Swedish police. The text also aims to ‘reconcile’ ‘safety’ with ‘social benefit’ in two different places:

[...] The goal [...] is to act for a more integrated and safe city and contribute to that no part of the city remains on the police’s list of particularly vulnerable areas by the year 2025 (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 6)

[...] The [parent company] estimates that it is possible to achieve the City’s ambition for not having any particularly vulnerable areas in Gothenburg in 2025. The efforts that the Group controls can contribute to a large extent and are most likely required for this ambition to be achieved. The efforts carried out will also be of great significance for decreasing segregation and decreasing inequality (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 11).

In both these quotes, decreasing segregation (or increasing integration) are listed alongside the goal for removing the areas off the police list. The second quote also mentions ‘decreasing inequality.’ Both the goal for decreasing segregation and the one for decreasing inequality can be said to work towards social benefit. This type of argument, that efforts to

increase safety also will contribute towards social benefit is present in my interviews with John and Mikael who both work at the parent company in the Framtiden Group.

Disorder, the Gårdsten Model and social control

In order to understand how safety work might relate to both social control strategies and segregation, as well as how safety work might have implications for segregation and inequality, I draw on previous research on how the discourse of safety within the allmännyttan has changed in meaning during the last decades. From ‘safety’ being primarily related to the notion of being able to rely on always having a home to go to regardless of one’s social status, the deregulations of national housing policies and the shaping of MHCs into independent market actors has contributed to the sphere of safety work being expanded to include other aspects related to housing. Because MHCs are cut off from financial aid from the state, and because the security for their credit loans is no longer vouched for by the municipality but instead is reliant on their housing stock property values, safety work now includes improving the physical condition of properties and the lived environment as well as outdoor environments, getting rid of ‘disorderly’ tenants and other measures for increased social control (Sahlin, 2010; Wennerström, 2010). Efforts to gentrify areas can be done in the name of safety by ‘mixing in’ middle-class residents and thus effectively displacing poorer tenants (Lees, 2008; Sahlin, 2010, p. 114). According to the strategy text, the efforts being employed to increase safety are motivated because they will generate financial returns. They could also “affect the image of Gothenburg in a very positive manner, both for the people who live here and in the rest of Sweden and the world” (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, pp. 26–27). Furthermore, the notion of *disorder* is not only associated with displacement and social control in the Swedish housing context but is also present in other urban policy discourses. Uitermark et al. (2007) argue that a discourse on disorder (‘liveability’) is invoked by Dutch local governments, thus enabling them to establish a new social order in ‘disadvantaged’ areas where the state seems to have lost its grip. Drawing on Loïc Wacquant, the authors argue that *advanced marginality* has concentrated in these areas since the crisis of the Fordist state and that urban policy has turned into crisis management. The establishing of a new social order through ‘social mixing’ is the only solution that authorities and local housing associations can conceive of (Uitermark et al., 2007, pp. 127–128). As I will show, many of the suggested efforts and methods in the strategy that are supposed to increase the perceived safety in the areas are about creating and maintaining order.

Zero tolerance strategies that are meant to reduce crime and increase safety is something the MHC Gårdstensbostäder has made use of ever since its quest for ‘uplifting’ the area of Gårdsten started. While the policy discourse on the ‘Gårdsten Model’ nowadays tell the tale of a successful transformation of a ‘problem area’ through democratisation and a persisting local social commitment, the measures for getting rid of ‘disorderly’ tenants during the MHCs early years was framed as a safety issue to minimise disturbances and threats for others living in Gårdsten (Borelius & Wennerström, 2009, p. 234, 2010, p. 58; The Framtiden Group, 2020a, p. 5). Because one of the directives in the municipal budget of 2020 to the Framtiden Group is to evaluate the Gårdsten model and implement it in the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ of Gothenburg, it is hardly surprising that zero tolerance also is emphasised in the strategy text. References to the widespread, albeit heavily criticized, Broken Windows theory as well as a policing theory known as FAS both explicitly relate the notion of disorder to perceived unsafety<sup>5</sup> (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, pp. 13–14). Alongside these theories, there are references to and discussions about conclusions drawn in the book *Förorten – ett samhällsvetenskapligt reportage* (Esaiasson, 2019). Through these references, the strategy text argues quite straightforwardly that enforcing a high degree of control is the solution to the problems that exist in Gothenburg’s ‘particularly vulnerable areas’:

[...] Within the field of political science there are theories on how functioning societies are created. In his book [...] political scientist Peter Esaiasson summarises the results from the research project he has carried out [...]. One observation is that the housing companies constitute the cohesive force in the suburban areas and are a solution to the problems that exist in the areas today. Further observations that have a bearing upon the direction of our strategy are:

- The suburbs do not possess the corresponding (as the rest of society) internal norm control that enables people to “keep an eye out” on themselves and others.
- A first goal consists of establishing an order that allows local trust and the positive social control to increase.
- In order to get there a strong, trustworthy and legitimate coordinating actor is needed, making sure that rules are followed and that those who break the rules are punished.
- The housing companies have more money to spend than the municipality, possess a direct relationship with all of the residents in the [areas], control a

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<sup>5</sup>This is how the strategy text describes ‘disorder’ in relation to the Broken Windows theory: “[...] Small amounts of disorder in an area creates more disorder, which in turn might lead to heavier crime. [...] As an example might a broken window be viewed as a sign that no one is taking measures and therefore lead to more damage, unsafeness and crime. In order to counteract this and decrease the risk for escalating problems, will zero tolerance and quick efforts be utilised on things such as graffiti and property damages, to demonstrate that there is order in the areas” (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 14)

coveted good and possess the freedom to act situationally. (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, pp. 14–15)

The argumentation made here is part of the author's upholding of the MHC Gårdstensbostäder's work as an example other MHCs might learn from (Esaiaasson, 2019). In a language that hardly requires any deconstruction, the strategy text argues that the *responsibility* for 'social disorder' lies with the individuals living in the affected areas and that controlling people, among other things through their need for somewhere to live, will generate trust and positive social control (Lemke, 2001). An ongoing effort in the Group that has to do with both disorder, social control and a responsabilising of the tenants is brought up in my interview with John:

[...] We have initiated a research project about waste management. [...] It will follow the strategy in many respects because efforts to improve waste management is a part of the strategy. [...] There are many assumptions related to waste and waste creation and how to attend to it. And we will, in a very structuralised manner, chart the places where we get waste violations, if we can call them that? Our caretakers who work in the areas, they will take pictures. When there is a waste bag in the wrong place or if there is a broken armchair outside of a house entrance or something like that. And out of this, different efforts will come (John, p. 6).

Just as John says, improved waste management is in the strategy text. Listed as an effort that is "judged to be effective for increasing safety and because of this will contribute substantially to fulfilling the Group's goal", it involves the active participation of the tenants (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 19). The effort is described with: "We work together with our tenants in order to achieve a waste management without littering" (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 19). How 'working together' with the tenants to improve waste management can be done is reflected upon by some of the interviewees. Jakob, who works at the subsidiary MHC, relates disorder to safety and crime in a way that resonates with the assumptions made in zero-tolerance theories:

When I came to [a 'particularly vulnerable area'] for the first time we owned a multistorey building [there]. The first question I asked was "Why is there such an ugly roof over there?" The lower parts where pitch black because there was a big roof above. [...] They told me "It's because people throw their trash out of the window." [...] As it turned out, the [pitch black area below the roof] showed to be a perfect spot for dealing drugs. [...] When [a construction firm] got the job to [remove it], they removed half of it and then they went home. They got so afraid because of the people standing there with their arms crossed, triggering them. [...] You can't think "Let's put up a roof because people throw out their trash." Then [...] you have go up and talk to these people (Jakob, p.14)

Mattias, who also works at the subsidiary, talks explicitly about increased control and how tenants must take responsibility for disorder. There are also efforts to 'educate' tenants:

It's also a lot about, and we haven't discussed this, getting people to take responsibility, and to feel proud of the area as well trusting us at [the subsidiary]. [...] We really need to prove that we want to do good, but they also need to take responsibility for taking care of the apartments, for correct waste management, according to the instructions. We're also working a lot with this. Now we have a new concept where we're having a resident school. We will show how to sort things, where the bicycle room is, how to take care of one's apartment and stuff like that. We need to be demand-makers [*kravställare*] so that we can meet and work towards the same goal. Esaiasson writes about that as well. Moral courage and taking responsibility for your home (Mattias, pp. 7-8)

In both quotes above, little room is left for explaining physical disorder in the 'particularly vulnerable areas' other than to point towards the lack of responsibility taken by the people who live there. However, what the MHCs perceive as disorder, or 'disorderly conduct' could also have more serious implications than what is described above for tenants living in the allmännyttan. In the last two decades, a record shortage of housing has contributed to not only overcrowded living conditions but also an illegal market for second-hand rental contracts. In Sweden, tenant who wishes to rent out his or her apartment must secure consent from the landlord. To be able to secure consent, the tenant must give valid reasons for renting out, such as moving somewhere else for a new work position, studies or for trial cohabiting. The level of rent is also regulated, and overcharging the rent is not allowed (Hyresnämnden, 2019). If a tenant is in violation of these regulations, he or she might lose the rights to the apartment. As the shortage for housing has increased, so has also the amount of illegal second-hand contracts, some of them charging a lot more than the rent paid to the landlord. Since 2019, the law regulating second-hand renting out of apartments was changed, giving landlords increased rights to evict or prosecute tenants that do not conform to these rules (Martinsson, 2019). Since then, efforts to combat this problem has increased. This is reflected in the strategy document. Also listed as an effort that will increase safety, it says: "We work systematically with correct procedures for renting out apartments so that we will achieve it in all of them" (The Framtiden Group, 2020b, p. 19). How the second-hand market for rental apartments are related to safety is emphasised by Mattias in our interview:

Safety is also knowing who your neighbours are, that half of them aren't renting out their apartments second-hand on the black market. Knowing the people that live around you is a question of safety (Mattias, p. 6).

In a manner that illustrates yet again how safety and disorder are overlapping notions within the policy discourse, Jakob talks about the second-hand market for rental apartments as the result of a lack of morality, or as the result of 'disorderly' conduct. He also talks about the consequences for people who are renting an apartment on the so-called 'black market':

J: Then there is the thing that's going on in all parts of the city, that people think it's ok to rent out your apartment without telling the landlord. It has become kind of "How can that be a problem? I can't abandon a rental apartment, it's worth a lot of money." People rent out their apartments illegally. We need to stop that

[...]

I: There are more homeless people nowadays, but...

J: Yes, there are more homeless people and that is because we are putting the foot down now. We took from Stockholmshem [another MHC] the idea of working systematically together with lawyers on incorrect rental procedures. During the period we have worked with this, I think it has become over a thousand now. A thousand apartments (Jakob, p. 11).

Mattias relates 'disorder' to illegal rental contracts as well:

It's the same thing as soon as we're noticing that someone is on a second-hand contract which isn't approved, or if twenty-five people are registered on an address. In that case someone is up to no good. We report all that stuff [...]. You have to have your house in order [...]. We're pushing this order thing and that means exposing the staff to dangers, they end up in situations where people get pressed: "Whether I park here or not is none of your fucking business!" But we're not quitting and if it's serious you lose your contract (Mattias, p. 5)

Disorder, and 'disorderly conduct' are notions used within Gothenburg's urban policy discourse to enforce social control. Social control strategies that I have discussed here include surveillance, 'schooling' tenants into assuming responsibility for the degradation and social disorder in their neighbourhoods, as well as getting rid of tenants who are renting apartments on the illegal second-hand housing market. All these social control strategies are actively justified within the policy discourse with the argument that they will increase perceived safety in tenants living in the affected areas. Increasing safety is within the policy discourse argued to generate increased social benefit as well. In contrast to this, I have shown in this first part of the analysis that social control strategies performed in the name of 'safety' contributes to processes of responsabilisation directed at 'disorderly' tenants. The construction of the areas as 'disorderly' and 'unsafe' contributes to a risk of displacement for tenants who are unable to present themselves as 'orderly' subjects.

Social mixing in stigmatised territories

Social mixing as a control strategy to for achieving a 'social balance' or establishing a new social structure within an area is used by policy makers in the western world and gentrification is one of the results (Lees, 2008; Uitermark et al., 2007). The strategy text argues that "[The Framtiden Group] is broadening the supply of housing which will entail an increase in demand and attractiveness" (City of Gothenburg, 2021, p. 3; The Framtiden Group, 2019a, 2019c, 2020b, pp. 4-6,26). An argument for 'mixing' that policy makers in Gothenburg (especially the right-wing coalition now in charge in the City Council) often put

forward is that owning one's own apartment is better than renting and that 'helping' people with buying an apartment is preferable, as it is a 'step up' for every tenant who gets to do this. This reasoning echoes in some of the interviews I've performed, where the concept of tenants embarking on 'housing careers' (*boendekarriärer*) has been discussed:

We're trying to have more of a mix of tenure forms. We're very heavy on rental apartments in these areas. We're trying to make it possible for anyone living in [a 'particularly vulnerable area'] who gets better off, and wants to stay, to be able to do a housing career there. Today people are moving to [a neighbouring wealthier area] when they do better economically and then the area gets refilled with someone that is facing the same challenges the first family had in the first place (Mattias, p. 4).

This concept rests on the assumption that people *prefer* to own their own apartments over renting them. If there are people who can afford to own their own apartments living in a neighbourhood that is dominated by rental apartments, they will be 'forced' to leave, and this will further increase segregation. Through this neoliberalised logic, 'mixing' through construction and conversions becomes almost like a kind of service to the residents in a neighbourhood that is dominated by rental apartments. However, the MHCs also profit from this logic. Christophers (2013, pp. 889–890) argues that the abolishment of the Tenant-Ownership Control Act in 1968, effectively subjecting all tenant-owned apartments to free market pricing, has contributed to the rapidly increasing prices for urban land to build on. He further argues that high land prices have contributed to the decline in construction of new rental apartments, since they simply cost 'too much' to build. However, developers know that they can build tenant-owned apartments with a profit, because market prices for these apartments are historically high (Christophers, 2013, p. 903). All of this taken together means that tenant-owned apartments, in the MHCs operating areas and in neighbouring areas, contribute to higher values for the housing stock the Framtiden Group owns. Because a large part of the Group's economy is based on credits and the security for them lies in their property value, more tenant-owned apartments mean increased economic capital for the MHCs. Reflections on the construction of new housing from John, who works at the parent company, further expand how this topic might be understood:

[...] Construction of new housing is about [...] creating conditions for people who's not traditionally looking for housing in the areas so that they can find attractive alternatives. [...] I think that this is really a long-term thing and it's difficult, but I think it's totally necessary to make...what we call an *area transfer*. Not only people who are socially and economically vulnerable are supposed to want to live in, for instance Gårdsten. [...] I think that's a big factor, to kind of nuance the tenure forms, that they're varied...new and fresh, some alternatives in housing, not just million programs (John, p.9).

This reflection indicates that the *public image* of a ‘particularly vulnerable area’ needs to change for middle-class individuals to want to move into it. I argue that another way to express this is that the areas need to suffer less from *territorial stigmatisation* (Wacquant, 2007). John argues that for achieving what the Group calls an ‘area transfer’ (removing an area from the police list) the area must become attractive. John upholds Gårdsten and the MHC Gårdstensbostäders work with ‘uplifting’ the area as something very positive in the interview, as does most of the interviewees I have talked with. Within Gothenburg’s urban policy discourse, the Gårdsten model is constructed as an inspiration for the other MHCs that now are trying to achieve further ‘area transfers.’ I want to conclude this part of the analysis with a reflection on the early days of Gårdstensbostäder by Jakob who works at the subsidiary company:

J: Gårdsten has done a terrific job, but they have done it during twenty-five years. And some of their stuff is a bit questionable, we wouldn’t be able to do that. For one thing, they have moved people away, they were allowed to do that. They got to say: “We will only have tenants here that have an income.” We can’t say that today.

I: Is that so?

J: No, we can’t...Well, we can. We have in our rental policy the possibility to decide that half of the people who will be given contracts must have some kind of income (Jakob, p. 6).

Jakob talks about what has been controversial with Gårdstensbostäder’s work since it engaged in ‘unconventional methods’ to develop its operating area. It has tried to change the composition of its population, by evicting ‘disorderly’ people and by refusing poor people rental contracts. Although I have asked questions about these methods employed by Gårdstensbostäder in my interviews, there seems to be a great reluctance to talking about this. The reflexive account from Jakob above is illustrating of how the MHCs are constantly working to ‘reconcile’ or ‘negotiate’ systemic contradictions related to social and economic benefit that dominate Gothenburg’s local urban development policy discourse.

## Discussion

One of my three questions is about how ‘scientific evidence’ is constructed within the policy discourse. I have described this construction by analysing the policy document containing the new strategy for Gothenburg’s ‘particularly vulnerable areas’, as well as by conducting and analysing interviews with actors that are co-constituting the discourse. By referring to the strategy text’s structure as *resembling that of a scientific report*, its style as *formal and disinterested* and its *main argument*, I argue that the text constructs texts and methods as



*working or not working* in relation to strategy goals, as ‘scientific evidence’. ‘Scientific evidence’ is constructed along these lines in nearly all my interviews (although Martin Grander contests it actively by expanding the construction to encompass complexity and diversity). In three of them, the construction of ‘scientific evidence’ is linked to police methods used to reduce or prevent criminality. The strategy text’s construction of ‘scientific evidence that works’ includes two ‘zero-tolerance’ theories (the FAS theory and Broken Windows) as well as the book *Förorten*. The Broken Windows theory has long been criticized, as researchers find little to no empirical support for the notion that disorder leads to serious crime, and the book *Förorten* has been criticized for not acknowledging relevant research that has been produced in the decades since the million-program areas were built. Based on these results, I argue that the construction of ‘scientific evidence’ within the discourse points to an increased emphasis on social control methods as well as methods to decrease ‘disorder’ in the ‘particularly vulnerable areas.’

I have also asked how contradictions between ‘economic benefit’ and ‘social benefit’ are ‘reconciled’ within the policy discourse. I have shown that, as a result of the contradictory relations between the demand for the MHCs to generate a return and the demand for them to carry out renovations without tenants being displaced, a neoliberalised hybrid model for renovations has been created within the policy discourse (Christophers, 2013; Hedin et al., 2012). The outspoken purpose of the model is that twenty per cent of the tenants subjected to renovations should pay nothing or next to nothing for them. However, in order to generate a return this model overcharges the remaining eighty per cent and responsabilises them as ‘sponsoring neighbours’ (Lemke, 2001). Through contextualising the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ I show how they have suffered from long-term economic disinvestment as a consequence of neoliberalised policy reforms (Hedin et al., 2012). This disinvestment has resulted in Gothenburg being increasingly socially polarised, and the demand in the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ for affordable renovations now greatly exceeds the twenty per cent offered by this hybrid model. Thus, contradictory relations between economic and social benefit poses a risk for tenants in the areas who will be subjected to much-needed future renovations.

Another answer to this question concerns the construction of ‘social mixing’ within the policy discourse. I show that construction of new housing is one strategy for how to ‘socially mix’ the city of Gothenburg. Social mixing is constructed by the policy documents and actors as a method for decreasing segregation. While the policy goal states that construction of new

housing should include a variation of tenure forms in both low-income and high-income areas, this goal is contradicted by the demand for the MHCs to act according to ‘business principles.’ Neoliberalised policy reforms, such as the deregulation of national housing policy, the removal of state subsidies to loans for construction of new housing, as well as the deregulation of tenant-owned apartment pricing, has contributed to the MHCs regarding construction of affordable housing economically unviable (Hedin et al., 2012). This has resulted in a strategy for the construction of new housing within the policy discourse that has a dualized hybrid character (Christophers, 2013). First, contradictory relations between economic and social benefit are contributing to a minimal amount of affordable rental apartments constructed in wealthier areas. Second, these contradictory relations also contribute to an emphasis on building tenant-owned apartments in the ‘particularly vulnerable areas.’ Both aspects contribute to a one-sided focus on the ‘losing side’ of the segregated city of Gothenburg.

I have also asked how contradictions between ‘social control’ and ‘social benefit’ is ‘reconciled’ within the policy discourse. I show that, by constructing the term ‘vulnerability’ as something highly associated with perceived safety, the strategy text focuses on safety work in order to fulfil the municipal goal of removing the areas from the police list by 2025. The policy discourse also constructs safety work as work that will contribute to decreased segregation. However, how MHCs have perceived ‘safety’ has changed during the last decades as a result of the deregulations and changes in housing policies that has shaped the MHCs into increasingly independent market actors. Safety work now includes maintaining physical and social order in neighbourhoods, with the purpose of increasing land and property values in order to secure loan financing (Sahlin, 2010; Borelius & Wennerström, 2009; Wennerström, 2010; Hedin et al., 2012). By constructing the areas as ‘disorderly’ and by responsabilising tenants for this disorder, strategies that aim to control and punish are emphasised as efforts that will increase safety and decrease segregation (Lemke, 2001; Wacquant, 2007). One example of this is the intensified work with evicting ‘disorderly’ tenants who are renting apartments illegally on the second-hand market. The construction of the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ as ‘disorderly’ and ‘unsafe’ poses a risk for tenants who are unable to secure, or maintain, a first-hand legal rental contract.

I give one more answer to this question by analysing how ‘social mixing’ could be used as a strategy for establishing a new social order within the ‘particularly vulnerable areas.’ While ‘social mixing’ is constructed within the policy discourse as having the purpose of decreasing

segregation, it is also constructed as something that will entail an increase in demand and attractivity. The policy discourse constructs *parts* of the Gårdsten method as successful in increasing attractivity, while suppressing the fact that the MHC Gårdstensbostäder, in its early days, actively tried to transform the image of the area by attempting to evict and exclude ‘disorderly’ tenants.

The results of this analysis pose a stark contrast to the claims forwarded by the book *Samhällsbygget Gårdsten – Allmännyttans framtid?* The book argues that it has been possible for the MHC Gårdstensbostäder to combine “strict business principles with social benefit in a broader sense” (Salonen, 2021). Contrary to this, I have demonstrated how they contradict each other. By defining Gårdstensbostäder’s *social commitment as building relationships with, as well as gaining the trust of, the tenants by creating a sense of safety, being available at all times, and being helpful in everyday situations* (Salonen, 2021, p. 159,182,183), I argue that the book avoids other goals for the allmännyttan that are supposed to generate social benefit as well. In this analysis, I show that the demand for the MHCs to act according to ‘business principles’ contradicts the demand for them to work towards generating social benefit, regardless of whether it’s related to segregation, safety or the supply of housing. I show that the Gårdsten model is constructed within the discourse as an inspiration for ‘transforming’ the areas, as well as an inspiration for social control strategies and maintaining order.

Two results in this analysis are particularly worthy of further discussion. While the Gårdsten model is constructed within the policy discourse as an inspiration, the aspect of how ‘gentle renovations’ (renovating apartments without it leading to any increase in rent levels) have been performed by Gårdstensbostäder has arguably *not* inspired the current model for renovating apartments in the million-program areas. The 20/80-model poses a real risk for the many tenants in the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ to become displaced because of rent increases. In this sense, this model constitutes one example of how the accumulation of economic capital might be explanatory for state-led gentrification in areas that have suffered from long-term disinvestment (Smith, 2002). On the other hand, the construction of the ‘particularly vulnerable areas’ as ‘disorderly’ and ‘unsafe’ and the increased work with evicting people who rent their apartments second-hand, resonates with how territorial stigmatisation combined with concentration of advanced marginality can lead to gentrification strategies by state actors that cannot conceive of any other solution (Uitermark et al., 2007; Wacquant, 2007).

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## Appendix

### Example interview guide

1. Vill du berätta lite om ditt uppdrag [i bolaget] och din historia där?
- 2: Vad är allmännyttan för dig?
3. Hur har man kommit fram till vilken forskning/vilka teorier som ska användas inom ramen för strategin?
5. Hur ser du på målsättningarna i strategin i relation till de sociala och ekonomiska mål som Framtidenkoncernen har?
6. Hur ser du på det ökade fokuset på trygghet i strategin?  
Följdfråga: En del av fokuset på trygghet verkar handla om mer social kontroll, man hämtar inspiration från Broken Windows och BRÅ:s fast teori. Hur ser du på att Bostadsbolagen anammar mer av en sådan roll?
7. Hur ser du på trygghetsskapande åtgärder utifrån de övergripande sociala och ekonomiska mål som vi har pratat om tidigare?
8. Ombildningar av hyresrätter till bostadsrätter är en del av strategin. Hur ser ni på ombildningar [i bolaget]?  
Följdfråga: Hur tycker du att ombildningar förhåller sig till de ekonomiska och bostadssociala verksamhetsmål som ni har?
9. Renoveringar, hur förhåller de sig till de sociala och ekonomiska målen?  
Följdfråga: Hittills har ju renoveringarna ofta följt en ”trappmodell” där hyresgäster får välja hur mycket standardhöjning de vill ha. Hur förhåller sig detta till de övergripande målen?

10. Vet du hur finansieringen av de icke standardhöjande renoveringarna går till? Finns det någon plan kring det?

11. De här 80/20-renoveringarna. Hur väljer man ut vilka lägenheter som ska renoveras utan hyreshöjningar? Det finns ju en oro bland många hyresgäster för hyreshöjningar, hade den här 80/20-modellen kunnat skapa mer oro tror du?

12. Har du tagit del av den forskning som finns om allmännyttan och Gårdstensmodellen?

Tex Ulf Borelius och Ulla-Britt Wennerströms artikel om Gårdsten

Nyttan med allmännyttan redaktör Tapio Salonen

Förorten av Peter Esaiasson

I Trygghetens namn av Ingrid Sahlin

Ha ett öga på klockan, ställ de rätta följdfrågorna, fråga efter en timma om det är ok att dra över lite