

'My Green Neighbourhood'

**Sustainability Potential of a Redevelopment
Initiative in a Stigmatized Housing Estate**

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Summary

One million homes were built in Sweden during the period 1965-1974, mostly financed by state housing loans and made available for renting. Large-scale rented housing then became commonplace, mostly built on virgin land on the outskirts of cities and towns. Although most of these 850,000 apartments are considered decently maintained, some 300,000 are still in need of refurbishment, especially with regard to bathrooms, kitchens, insulation and ventilation. This is a great opportunity for technological innovations, potentially contributing to energy-saving and climate mitigation on a broad scale. However, many of these estates have also been associated with social problems like spatial segregation and social exclusion. Under the label “suburb” [förort], these estates have become stigmatized, triggered by massive critique from journalists, writers, politicians, architects and even researchers.

The empirical focus of this report is on an attempt by a municipal housing company to approach the residents of a multi-family housing estate with a redevelopment scheme expressing a will to combine social and ecological qualities under the brand “My Green Neighbourhood”. The company wants to change their everyday behaviour by constructing energy-saving technical solutions, increase residents’ participation and social inclusion and redress the identity of the area in the eyes of residents, visitors and outside spectators. Drawing upon data describing the aim and scope of the redevelopment scheme, the dialogue activities undertaken during the planning phase, and residents’ reactions, the analysis relates to current debates on the potentials and limits of citizen participation in urban renewal in terms of the sustainability discourse.

Although the study only covers the planning process until the end of 2011 when the housing company took its final decision, conclusions also consider the potential of future implementations. Whereas prospects of success with regard to energy-saving investments are bright, other results are more open to question. Thus, whether technological innovations will also inspire households to lead a more climate-friendly life in general must also take other things than housing into consideration, in particular their life situations and lifestyles in a broad sense. Thus, residents’ willingness to participate in planning and politics, and their social inclusion in society at large are matters not only related to housing. Depending on the capacity and willingness of residents to pay and stay it is unclear how many of the present inhabitants will stay or leave for other households to move in.

There is little doubt regarding the housing company’s commitment in terms of professional and long-term financial responsibility. In addition, the company’s social ambitions do not only include a willingness to engage residents in planning and caring for their apartments and the outdoor environment. The housing company also cooperates with the main contractor with a view to employing more than 50 until now unemployed residents in the building process.

Finally, at the time of writing, it seems that My Green Neighbourhood should *not* be disregarded as just one more number in a never-ending parade of temporary projects. Its brand of social, economic and technological innovations have multi-dimensional sustainability potential that may even contribute to a decent make-over and a positive branding of a large, previously stigmatized multi-family city district.

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I INTRODUCTION

The potential and willingness of individuals and households to change their attitudes and behaviour towards sustainable consumption and lifestyles are issues increasingly raised in policy and research, as illustrated by concepts like “ecological citizen”, “political consumer” and “moral agent”. However, green values and attitudes, and a willingness to change one’s consumption behaviour, do not come out of nothing. Therefore a long-term change in behaviour requires substantial support from public and private institutions that are open for dialogue. This brings attention to the role of global, national and local authorities in environmental governance.

The focus of this report is an attempt by a municipal housing company in a Swedish city to approach the residents in one part of a multi-family housing district with a redevelopment scheme expressing a will to combine social and environmental qualities under the brand “My Green Neighbourhood”. Considering a common view of a socially vulnerable, multi-ethnic and stigmatized area, the company wants to increase residents’ participation, and identification with the area, and at the same time change their behaviour in a climate friendly direction by constructing energy saving and other “green” technical solutions. Marrying these social and ecological ambitions in one and the same redevelopment scheme is a formidable challenge raising intriguing questions for policy and research.

Drawing upon data describing the aim and scope of the redevelopment scheme as presented by the company, the dialogue activities undertaken during the planning phase, and the residents’ reactions so far, the analysis relates to current debates on the potential and limits of socio-spatial theory as well as participatory and deliberative environmentalism. Overriding questions are: Can projects like this inspire residents to make them “behave cleanly”, maybe even without “thinking green”, and at the same time strengthen their positive identification with the neighbourhood? What are the potential and limits of deliberative top-down interventions of this kind? Can they contribute to sustainable development?

The report is organized into seven sections. In section two we give a brief presentation of the estate in focus, i.e. Vivalla in Örebro, in particular the Visgatan part of the estate which is targeted for a pilot investment project with planned multiplication effects upon future refurbishment of the whole estate. In section three we present our interest-oriented, methodological approach to the study. The topic of section four is the conceptual framework in terms of three dimensions of space, participation and deliberative environmentalism. In section five we embed our case in the context of social rented housing as constructed during the Million Homes Programme [miljonprogrammet] 1965-1974 and now facing crucial challenges of energy-saving reconstruction and social rehabilitation. Largely drawing upon interviews with representatives of the municipal government, the housing company and the residents, the focus of

the sixth section is the planning process of the project “My Green Neighbourhood”. Finally, in section seven we return to and reflect upon our study in the light of our initially stated questions, and the related conceptual framework. We also single out crucial questions to be reflected upon by the housing company ahead of the planned, forthcoming phases of neighbourhood renewal in Vivalla.

II ‘MY GREEN NEIGHBOURHOOD’ – A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

In autumn 2008 the Swedish Government launched the Delegation for Sustainable Cities [Delegationen för hållbara städer]. Presenting itself as “a national arena for sustainable urban development” with the mission to “promote the sustainable development of cities, urban communities and housing areas”, the mission includes:

making a contribution to knowledge development, giving its backing to existing initiatives; collecting and disseminating best practice examples; promoting dialogue and co-ordinating different sectors and skills; facilitating public-private cooperation; strengthening the development, use and export of green technology, and promoting international cooperation on sustainable urban development. (Delegationen för hållbara städer 2012a: 30)

Financial support for a project was to be given on the condition that the applicant (a municipality or a housing company) invested the major part of the total cost, which was considered a guarantee for its long-term ambition and viability.¹ During 2008-2012 the Delegation awarded EUR 357 million to nine major investment projects and 89 planning projects (Delegationen för hållbara städer 2012c). At the end of 2012 the mission of monitoring the implementation of the projects was handed over to the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning [Boverket] (Delegationen för hållbara städer 2013).

My Green Neighbourhood, initiated and led by the municipal housing company ÖrebroBostäder AB (ÖBO), will refurbish a part of Vivalla, called Visgatan, presently with 123 apartments. Measures will be implemented in terms of “energy use and climate impact; participation and lifestyles; integration and employment; preservation of cultural environments and artist involvement” (Delegationen för hållbara städer 2012a: 12). Experiences gained through the pilot project are then to be considered and somehow transferred to the rest of the company’s 2,400 apartments in Vivalla. As indicated by its name, the project goals are officially described as follows:

¹ The Delegation for Sustainable Cities provides financial support with 30% of the costs for measures reducing the greenhouse gases emissions, exceeding what is demanded in official regulations. (Förordning 2008:1407). In My Green Neighbourhood total investment costs amount to 170 million SEK (EUR 19,4 million) of which the delegation will contribute SEK 9,235,000 (EUR 1,1 million), directed to investments in energy saving techniques to exceed the national norm for energy use per square meter.

My. [...] to give the residents a strong sense of affinity and make them feel more at home. Residents will feel prouder, safer and more at home in the area as well as gain an understanding and knowledge of how they can influence their own surroundings. Participation will lead to a sense of affinity and responsibility.

Green. [...] to strengthen the neighbourhood's green values in a concrete and palpable way. Energy use in the area will be more than halved. Waste heat will be reused in a local heating system and renewable energy will be produced. A new street and cycle-path structure will help to reduce car use and encourage green transport options. The quality of green areas will be improved to create better recreational opportunities, promoting play and other physical activity and making the area more enjoyable to live in.

Neighbourhood. [...] to strengthen the identity of the neighbourhood by implementing technical, artistic and educational measures. The structure will be similar to that of the rest of Örebro and improve the district's contact with the city. The contrasts between private and public space will be elucidated. Opportunities for social contacts among neighbours will be improved. (Delegationen för hållbara städer 2012a: 12)

The project in brief

Conversion of a million-home area
 Strengthened neighbourhood identity
 50 per cent reduction in energy consumption
 Production of renewable energy
 New street structure to reduce car use
 Employing local residents and cooperating with the national employment agency
 Consideration of cultural and historical values
 Influencing lifestyles by involving residents and other stakeholders on a wide scale

(Source: Delegationen för hållbara städer 2012a: 13)



Figure 1. Two-storey apartment buildings at Visgatan.



Figure 2. Grab-shot Visgatan – illustrating the conflict between the green neighbourhood ideal and private convenience.

III THE RESEARCH MISSION

The empirical analysis of My Green Neighbourhood during its planning process 2011-2012 will be the exclusive topic of section VI. Now we will present the analytical approach chosen for our study. Evaluations can be carried out for various purposes, with various levels of ambition, and by various methods. Thus, there is no single approach to evaluation that is applicable to any and every purpose, object, and situation. Furthermore, any object, purpose, or situation may be evaluated from different perspectives. Evert Vedung, for example, in a survey article, with a particular focus on the Swedish context, identifies “four waves of evaluation diffusion” since 1960, i.e. the experimental “scientific wave”, the participatory “dialogue-oriented wave”, the “neo-liberal wave”, and, the currently popular, “evidence-based wave”, implying a renaissance for scientific experimentation (Vedung 2010).

In this study we apply an interest-orientated approach, with a particular focus on the complex web of potential and actual conflicts involved in housing and urban renewal. As independent researchers, financed by the housing company and the governmental Delegation for Sustainable Cities, part of our commitment is also to deliver input to the planning process with regard to the intended, forthcoming renewal of the whole Vivalla estate. In that sense our approach also has a dialogue orientation, although our own analysis, partly based on interviews with participants, obviously could not have any repercussions on the recently finished planning process, but is something that might have an influence in the next step, i.e. after 2012. This input is based on an analysis of the planning process before the implementation of the decision taken by the housing company in December 2011, physically launched in February 2013². In addition, we are contracted to return to the area in spring 2015 with a follow-up study of this first phase of renewal.³

Housing and urban renewal involve a range of aspects and interests.⁴ For instance, physical change in the built-up environment has not merely architectural, functional and technical consequences but also economic, ecological and social ones. Such consequences are seen differently depending on whether you are rich or poor, young or old, man or woman, owner or tenant, and whether you have been living in the area for a long time or have just arrived. To create some order in this complex mix of interests and actors, roles, and processes, we identify three main levels of analysis: (i) the contextual framework, including identification of interests and actors (section V), (ii) the latter’s attitudes and actions as expressed in the planning process section VI), and (iii) a summarizing comparison and critical discussion of themes and

² Due to a judicial appeal by one of the applicant entrepreneurs the implementation was delayed a couple of months. The refurbishment work was inaugurated on 14 February 2013 (Nerikes Allehanda 15 February 2013).

³ Thus, it is only to some extent a case of on-going evaluation [följeforskning] (see for example Svensson et al. 2009).

⁴ Our study is inspired by the interest-oriented approach to housing and urban renewal proposed by Elander & Schéele (1989).

issues (section VII), as related to the initially defined main actors and interests and their appearance in the process. In the concluding section of the report we also single out crucial issues to be addressed by the housing company when planning for future renewal of Vivalla.

Aside from references to some recent literature on sustainable development, neighbourhood and urban renewal the report is based on documentary studies, interviews and observations at meetings between representatives of the housing company and residents at Visgatan. As shown in Appendix I only three residents on Visgatan have been interviewed. However, observations at open meetings and reports from information and dialogue meetings arranged by the tenants' organisation, ÖBO and Cesam have provided us with more information on the tenants' worries and opinions. Nevertheless, we can't say that the voices we have heard speak for all inhabitants on Visgatan. As the refurbishment coordinator have pointed out, several of the tenants remain passive to the refurbishment process, do not want to participate, and are quite content with the removal to another, temporary or not, apartment. Yet, our experience is that the critical voices are to be taken seriously, as they point at shortages in this and similar future processes that can, and should be improved.

Our role as researchers, so far, has not been explicitly interventional as we have restricted ourselves to observation and reflection. However, in the final section of the report we compare and critically discuss the observations we have made in the process, implying that our study may potentially have some impact on the planned, forthcoming renewal process in Vivalla.

IV CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework chosen as a departure for our empirical study combines socio-spatial theory related to the works of Henri Lefebvre, with theories of deliberative environmentalism, and participatory planning.

IV.1 Three dimensions of space

The built environment, in the form of a building, a neighbourhood, a town or a city could be read by help of Lefebvre's distinction between "perceived, conceived and lived moments, three aspects of a conceptual triad, synonym to spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representation" (Knott 2010: 24). As "spatial practice" Visgatan is a physical place where residents walk, eat, sleep, chat and lead much of their everyday lives. As "representation of space" it is the conceived aspect, the meaning or identity given to the residential area by the local government, town planners, architects, and the housing company and its staff. Finally, as "spaces of representation" ("lived space") it signals how the area is perceived by the residents in terms of positive and/or negative attitudes and sentiments, and in intercourse with each other and non-residents (Lefebvre 2009: 223-53). The three dimensions of space

identified by Lefebvre can be distinguished from one another only in theory, and do in real life “exist at the same time and are intertwined in a trialectic relation” (de Haardt 2010: 174). A simplified way of saying this is that “physical, social and mental spaces intersect and overlap” (Knott 2010: 35; cf. Lefebvre 2009: 224-25). This intimately related triad of spatial dimensions will be touched upon in all of the following subsections although the focus will shift from the physical to the mental and, finally, to the social dimension.

IV.2 Construction of identities

Different actors experience and evaluate the qualities of their environment in different ways, i.e. sense of place is an ambiguous concept that has to be interpreted in relation to different actors and interests. In other words, people’s identification with their environment could be very different, i.e. it is a question of multiple identities. In his classical work *Place and Placelessness* Relph (1976) elaborates on the different meanings of a place, or identity of places, in the eyes of people living in that particular place and knowing it from within, and in the eyes of people looking at the place from a (mental) distance:

The major components of the identity of place do not apply solely to places, but are to be found in some forms in all geographies, landscapes, cities and homes. The essence of place lies not so much in these as in the experience of an ‘inside’ that is distinct from an ‘outside’; more than anything else this is what sets places apart in space and defines a particular system of physical features, activities, and meaning. To be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place (Relph 1976: 49).

To make the difference between an outsider’s and an insider’s perception of a place even more distinct, Relph clarifies:

From the outside you look upon a place as a traveller might look upon a town from a distance, from the inside you experience a place, are surrounded by it and part of it (Relph 1976: 49).

Thus, the more acquainted you are with a certain place the more profound is your identification with it as you become a part of it. However, as individuals have different backgrounds and personalities and make use of the place in different ways, even insiders’ experiences of a place are individual and differ from each other. On a community scale a group of people can assign a special meaning to a place, for example a green area can be assigned a high natural or recreational value by one group of users and be looked upon as a disturbing barrier between two neighbourhoods by others. Finally, following Relph (1976: 58) there is the consensus identity of a place, the public identity that has “developed from the free opinion and experience of groups and individuals”, that even if it is “at a rather superficial level of integration of interest [...] ties together group images of places”. The public identity is contrasted against the

mass identity, that are ready-made images, fabricated by opinion-makers, and disseminated by mass media and advertisements, the most simplified and superficial of the types of images.

Recent studies of identity in the urban environment draw attention to the diversity of identities in one place. Human geographer Elisabeth Lilja concludes in a study of the complexity of identities in a modern suburb, that there are both inhabitants that experience identity, anchorage and belonging [hemkänsla] and those who live in social alienation [utanförskap] (Lilja 2002: 42). In the first case, the inhabitants may well feel integrated in the suburb, while still being segregated in relation to the city as a whole. Thus, not only the social but also the physical environment is of importance in creating a sense of belonging and positive identification with a suburb or a housing area. A physically hard or poorly built environment may convey an image of a likewise hard or poor living environment both to its inhabitants and to outsiders. If the physical environment does not match the inhabitants' perceived identity they may react with disassociation or by moving away. On the other hand, the identity of a part of a city also builds on the social activities and interaction taking place there in places such as cafés, bars etc. These amenities signal an identity of creativity and togetherness (Lilja 2011) at least with people with the same values and interests.

Not only the present physical environment, but also the historical dimension constitutes the identity of a place (Brusman 2008). This is perhaps at first glance more relevant in an old urban environment where now gone landmarks are still present in people's memory. In Vivalla, probably none of the present inhabitants have any idea of the old gardening and farming landscape that preceded the modern housing estate, or even (with just a few exceptions) memories of the birth of the modern Vivalla estate in the late 1960s. The connection between the present green environment in the housing area and the gardening in early days, something the housing company underscores as a positive value in its project plan, is probably not of relevance for the Vivalla inhabitants today.⁵

IV.3 Government-citizen dialogue towards sustainability?

Participation is a key element of My Green Neighbourhood, including the tenants' involvement in the planning process as well as in the introduction of technical solutions for reducing the environmental impact of their own behaviour, for example by constructing a "mobile laboratory", where technology and smart everyday knowledge could be visualised through art, film and drama.⁶ In addition, unemployed people from the local area will be offered opportunities to be involved/employed in the rebuilding process. Although this is not formally a part

⁵ However, in one part of Vivalla estate, a number of Vivalla inhabitants grow all sorts of vegetables in allotments. There is also a standing photo exhibition at the district centre, reminding the onlooker of old Vivalla with its gardens and production of vegetables for the city market.

⁶ The housing company has employed an artist to spend part of her working time with this project that is still under construction (early spring 2013).

of My Green Neighbourhood, it is a parallel initiative also co-financed by the housing company and the Delegation of Sustainable Cities.⁷ However, before looking at the role of residents' participation in the planning process at Visgatan we will locate participation as such in the context of democracy and environmental governance.⁸

There is not, and could not be, a blueprint for efficient and democratic environmental policies. What we have, and must live with for the foreseeable future, is a patchwork of partly overlapping assemblies, at different levels and sectors, thus representing different spheres of authority. Parallel to formal government institutions there is also a structure of informal, voluntary associations such as social movements, environmental associations and NGOs at various levels including World Social Forum and similar initiatives. However, although such collective participation and deliberation on a global scale are crucial to meet the challenge of global warming and other environmental problems, there is also a need for representative institutions armed with the legitimacy and power to push development towards sustainability, and to withstand actions of powerful interests that pose substantial threats to human health and the human environment. Representing all citizens within its territory, and not just particular categories, municipalities have a unique role in setting the policy agenda for the city as a legitimate, collective local actor (Le Galès 2002, Elander & Montin 1990). Local government of towns and cities represents the formal level of authority closest to the citizens, thus making them potentially attentive to citizen needs and resources. This brings three mechanisms of democracy into focus, i.e. representation, participation and deliberation.

Within modern democratic thinking, *representation* is probably the most frequently mentioned mechanism, referring to a system of governance where free and general elections are the central mechanism used to safeguard democracy (Dahl 1971). Citizens' possibility to influence politics consists of their right to vote for representatives of various political parties. Between elections these representatives make the decisions. Active participation by citizens between elections is not necessary, and perhaps not even desirable. Transition to an environmentally sustainable society has to take place through discussion, consideration and decision-making in a process where the participants are elected representatives given a mandate to speak on behalf of a larger group, i.e. the electorate. In this sense the local government in Örebro and its housing company are democratically elected institutions representing the citizens of Örebro, although the residents in the area may very well be consulted about the refurbishment, collectively through the local residents' association [hyresgästföreningen], a public meeting, or individually through surveys or face-to-face inquiries. Notably, within this strand

⁷ In late September 2012 the Delegation decided on financial support to the city of Örebro for evaluating one innovative employment initiative with a multicultural orientation, i.e. targeting unemployed immigrant youth living in Vivalla.

⁸ The three models of democracy as applied in relation to the environment are systematically compared in Lidskog & Elander (2007; 2010).

of democratic thought this kind of participation could not be a replacement, but only a complement to the representative process of government.

The mechanism of *participation* emphasizes the importance of citizens being active not only during elections, but also in the intervals between them (Pateman 1970). Participation can take place in the form of demonstrations, petitions, contributions to media debates or other expressions of opinion, or as direct participation in decision-making processes, for example in referendums, user committees and alternative decisional forums. Such direct participation is assumed to increase citizens' political self-confidence, their trust in the political system and their understanding of the common good.

The mechanism of *deliberation* finally states that discussion and argumentation are vital components in democratic decision-making process, primarily by those who will be affected by the decisions to be taken. Proponents thus believe deliberative democracy to be sensitive to feedback signals and able to handle complex issues such as climate change and other threats to the environment. Following this line of thought broad public participation in politics will favour positive environmental outcomes, since it is ultimately a question of people's own health, quality of life and even survival. In the truly deliberative decision-making process the involved parties have the time and opportunity to present their views and arguments and to weigh them against each other so that they can modify their positions and reach a decision that is satisfactory, or at least tolerable, to all (Dryzek 1994; Baber & Bartlett 2005; Gutmann & Thompson 2004).

In other words, an environmental policy that is consistent with basic democratic values has to be representative of relevant groups of people (different *demoi*), it has to offer opportunities for citizen participation and it has to open up spaces for deliberation. But how and to what extent are these deliberative mechanisms valid when responding to the challenges of climate change and global warming, and issues of social sustainability?⁹ In our study of the planning process we approach the Visgatan residents, using Sherry Arnstein's classical eight-rung ladder of citizen participation as our rough guide of analysis (Arnstein 1969). In other words, we investigate whether the invitation of residents in the planning process gave them a real opportunity to influence the outcome ("citizen influence/power"), whether they were just informed what was going to happen anyhow ("therapy"/"manipulation"), or something in-between ("consultation/tokenism"). In the concluding section (VII) we relate our findings on this topic to the concepts of space and identity as introduced earlier in this section.

⁹ We regard "social sustainability" as a largely normative umbrella term, in the literature covering a wide spectrum of theoretical fragments and policy targets. See for example a number of articles in a special issue of the online journal *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, Volume 8, Issue 12, Winter 2012.

V SETTING THE CASE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL RENTED HOUSING IN SWEDEN

To understand the problem identification and the solutions proposed by the municipal housing company, ÖreboBostäder (henceforth labelled ÖBO), we will in this section give brief surveys of the social, economic and ecological drivers for redevelopment, and also relate these to the Vivalla estate in Örebro, where the real planning process of the project My Green Neighbourhood started in 2010, although not actually inaugurated and physically targeted until February 2013.

V.1 The social challenges

One million homes were built in Sweden during the period 1965-1974, mostly financed by state housing loans and made available for renting. Large-scale “social rented” housing then became commonplace, mostly built on virgin land on the outskirts of cities and towns. In international research the performance of the Million Homes Programme has been regarded as an outstanding “success story” (the term explicitly used by Headey, 1978; cf. Dickens et al. 1985; Heclo and Madsen 1987; Torgersen 1987). Outside Sweden “social housing” was targeted at “especially vulnerable groups, families with many children, farmworkers etc.”, whereas housing policy in Sweden after 1946 aimed at “good dwellings for all”, i.e. there should be no poverty or exclusion stamp on living in a social rented apartment (Nyström 1989; cf. Harloe, 1994; Elander 1991). In 1974 the official housing policy goal was sharpened to mean equality between different tenures in terms of standard, costs and influence (Lundqvist et al. 1990).

However, after almost 40 years many of the Million Homes estates have been associated with social problems like segregation and exclusion in a way that was never meant. Under the label “suburb” [förrort] these estates have become stigmatized as a result of massive critique from journalists, writers, politicians, architects and even researchers. One writer, himself an exception from this negative choir, comments that a number of social problems have been “projected” on this kind of areas: “The isolated man. The inhuman environment. The great desolation. The modern slum. The cold wind. The closed castle.” (Wirtén 2010: 35). The negative brand of these areas in the general urban planning discourse in Sweden has been scrutinized and confirmed by Moa Tunström in her PhD thesis, showing that the image of the suburb and the Million Homes estates is painted as the emblem of modernist urban building and planning. “Modernism” in this context is simply equal to something “ugly” or “boring” (Tunström 2010: 73).

As argued by Tunström, Wirtén and others this one-sided negative image of the Million Homes estates does not correspond to the image given to these areas by the majority of residents themselves. The horror images have largely been painted by observers without personal

experience of living in these areas, and when such an image has been established as a “truth”, it has become a stereotype that is difficult to change.¹⁰ Recent European research on areas with more severe social problems than their Swedish counterparts, however, shows that there are big differences in attitudes among the residents. Thus “differentiation” is the key concept and common thread in a recent publication, comparing 30 post-Second World War housing estates across Europe (Rowlands et al. 2009). Far from all residents find these estates depressive. Quite a few of them do regard their estate as being not so bad, sometimes even their beloved home district [hembygd]¹¹:

Even when blocks of flats look unattractive from the outside and to outsiders, there is a big chance that a large part of the inhabitants are satisfied with just living there. We should therefore be careful not to pay too much attention to physical issues. (Van Beckhoven et al. 2009: 43)

Also in Sweden recently, a number of research reports, newspaper articles, and more or less biographical publications have begun to question the “horror picture” of the Million Homes estates (Langhorst 2013; Wirtén 2010).

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that social segregation also has clear spatial manifestations. Just as in most other countries, access to employment, money, education and other resources largely decides one’s place of living. Ever since the beginning of the 1990s this has meant that many Million Homes estates have become dominated by foreign born inhabitants or inhabitants with foreign born parents, i.e. they have become short of so called “ethnic Swedes”¹². As shown by geographer Roger Andersson with colleagues in several studies, social segregation is primarily a question of unequal resources in society at large, although it has striking spatial manifestations. People who move into distressed neighbourhoods generally have lower incomes and worse health, are less educated, and more likely to be unemployed and dependent on social benefits than those leaving the neighbourhoods.

As long as the areas targeted are affected by this kind of selective migration, the area-based urban policy might succeed in helping individuals, but it will not succeed in changing the socio-economic profile or the structural position of the targeted areas. It will

¹⁰ One of the participants at a public meeting at Visgatan (My Green Neighbourhood project) re-told the following little conversation: “I moved to Vivalla 1995. When a friend of mine heard that I was going there she said: ‘How can you move there, it is the worst area in the city? It’s terrible.’ – ‘How do you know, have you lived there, have you been there?’ – ‘No, but I’ve heard’”. (Notes taken by the authors of the report, Gustavsson and Elander 2011-12-05, see Appendix I)

¹¹ Similar conclusions are drawn by Lilja (2000).

¹² The term “ethnic Swede” is problematic. Considering the fact that many immigrants with non-white skin are Swedish citizens and have parents, grandparents etc. who have lived in Sweden for a very long time the term has a racial connotation that makes it unacceptable as an analytical concept. Allan Pred (2000: 265) pinpoints the problem of dividing people into groups by the colour of their skin by quoting an aphorism from a production in 1994 of the 19th century play writer Alfred Jarry ‘s play *Ubu Roi*: “All people are coloured, otherwise we wouldn’t be able to see them.”

therefore also fail in achieving the overall goal of ‘breaking’ segregation (Andersson et al. 2010: 251).

V.2 Economic and ecological challenges

Of the 877,000 apartments in multi-family housing built in Sweden between 1960-1975 there are still 850,000 left. Around 300,000 of these are still in need of rather thorough refurbishment, especially with regard to bathrooms, kitchens, insulation and ventilation. According to an estimation made by Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning the investments needed for refurbishment will amount to somewhere between SEK 38-92 billion, notably if implemented promptly (Boverket 2011). However, as this is also a great opportunity for energy saving technical solutions, the amount of money needed for refurbishment is difficult to assess. Depending on a housing company’s degree of ambition and financial assets the total cost may vary. As argued by one experienced, former employee at ÖBO the housing estates and apartments built between 1960 and 1975 have been continuously refurbished, and are on the whole far from dilapidated.¹³

Almost half of the Million Homes stock is owned by public housing companies, one quarter by private companies, and one quarter by cooperative housing associations (Industrifakta 2011). For the public housing companies the refurbishment challenge has a special dimension, as they are now facing new legislation demanding that they “should run their operation on businesslike principles, which represents a deviation from the principles embodied in the Local Government Act requiring operations to be run on a cost price basis and prohibiting undertakings being run for profit” (SABO 2010). So far, the government has not indicated any willingness to offer special subsidies or loans for supporting the major refurbishment needed, thus raising fears that post-refurbishment rents have to increase substantially (Byggvärlden 2011).¹⁴ This is controversial as housing companies are also a crucial part of the government’s strategy to implement its environmental goals, something that adds another dimension to the need for extra financial resources.

The Swedish Parliament has adopted 16 environmental quality objectives, describing what state and quality of the country’s environment are sustainable in the long term. As an overall objective of environmental policy, a “generational goal” has also been set.

This defines the direction of policy in this area and is intended to guide environmental efforts at every level in society. Milestone targets, finally, define steps

¹³ Cf. P.A. Strömberg, former ÖBO employee in a reply to a local politician, and member of ÖBO’s governing board, who in a debate article had asked for “a comprehensive refurbishment” of the large housing estates built during the 1960s and 1970s (Strömberg 2012; Harrysson 2012).

¹⁴ In a parliamentary debate with the Green Party spokesperson Gustaf Fridolin 16 January 2013 Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt stated that financial responsibility for refurbishment of these estates must be the sole commitment of the real estate owners themselves (Source: notes taken by the authors from the debate, as broadcasted by Radio Sweden Program 1).

along the way to the generational goal and the environmental quality objectives. To attain these environmental objectives, everyone has a part to play – individuals, companies and authorities at every level. [...] An understanding of the economic values and benefits which ecosystems provide is crucial to action to achieve the environmental quality objectives and sustainable development. Sweden's environmental and health problems must not be solved by exporting them to other countries. The environmental objectives system supports all stakeholders in their efforts to secure a better environment. (Naturvårdsverket 2011)

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency [Naturvårdsverket] has the overall responsibility for follow-up of the 16 objectives. A review of progress is reported annually on the Environmental Objectives Portal. Every four years – once every parliamentary term – an in-depth evaluation is presented. This work is carried out in consultation with other authorities having responsibilities within the environmental objectives system, and with input from non-governmental bodies.

County administrative boards are responsible for regional efforts to attain the environmental objectives. They adopt regional goals, develop and promote appropriate measures and monitor progress. Local authorities use the objectives in land use planning and other activities, and work for a better environment in dialogue with local people, companies and other stakeholders. Housing companies, and especially those owned by the municipalities, have a special responsibility in this context.

Among the 16 environmental goals, one is of particular interest with regard to the municipalities and the housing companies as well, i.e. “a well built environment”. A number of specifications of this goal are listed by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency [Naturvårdsverket]. These goals target several issues important to the quality of life, such as protection and preserving of the cultural and natural surroundings, securing safety and reducing risk in traffic and by pollution, requesting energy efficiency and use of renewable energy etc., all to assure the development of a sustainable urban structure. For a comprehensive list with all specified goals see Appendix II (Naturvårdsverket 2012).

VI THE VIVALLA ESTATE AND ‘MY GREEN NEIGHBOURHOOD’

Located in the north-west periphery, five kilometres away from Örebro city centre, the Vivalla estate was built during 1967-1970 with more than 7,000 residents at the time of completion (Egerö 1979: 172-183). Except for a few high-rise buildings constructed later for housing purposes next to the centre of Vivalla, there are today (2012) about 2,400 apartments in two-storey buildings, most of which are owned by the municipal housing company (ÖBO). The

number of inhabitants is close to 7,000.¹⁵ According to the city-planning architect at the time the low-rise character of the whole area was intended to:

reduce disturbances within the area due to smaller distance between the apartments and fewer apartments bordering every staircase. This is a planning target we should aim at [...] all apartments with a separate entrance to the open air, no apartment directly surfacing another. (Town planning architect Arborelius, as quoted in Egerö 1979: 178)

Built on land that was earlier largely used for farming and gardening the Vivalla estate is still strikingly green and park-like, surrounded by forest and cultivated land. The centre of the estate hosts basic medical and dental services, elementary school, food store, hairdresser, restaurant, café, library, local police, and a few meeting rooms. Several nurseries are spread around the estate. The housing company has a district office within the estate, including a district manager, local housing managers [bovärdar] and some other staff. Adjacent to the centre there is a swimming pool, and the large schoolyard is a facility for different events, for example the annual Vivalla Day in the beginning of June. Within walking distance of Vivalla there is a large shopping area including supermarkets, liquor store [Systembolaget], a large market garden, and a number of various firms. Since 2011 there has also been a mosque, neighbouring the estate to the eastern side.

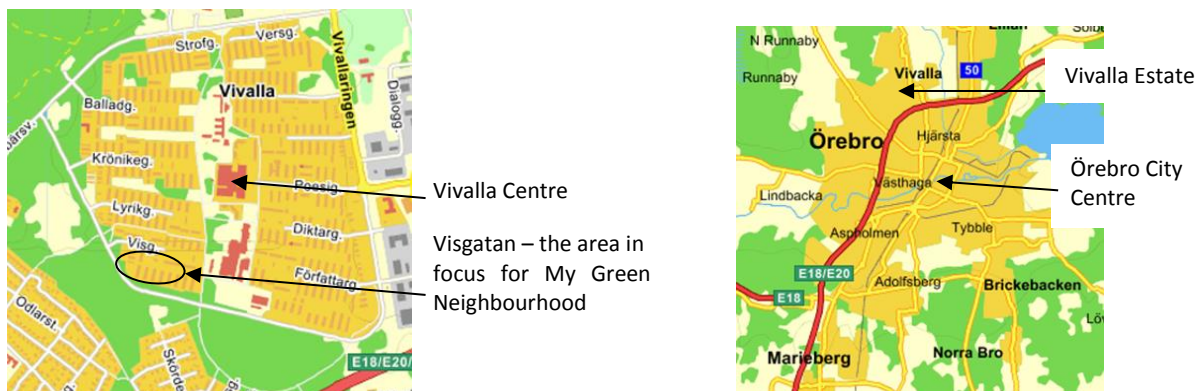


Figure 3. Maps of Vivalla Estate and Örebro City.

The estate is surrounded by a circular road with fingers into parking lots, each within about 150 metres of each apartment. There are no roads cutting through the estate, only paths reserved for walking and cycling, although these are not always respected by car drivers. Transport by bus to the city centre takes about 15 minutes, but there are only five bus stops, i.e. one in the centre of Vivalla and all others in the north-eastern part of the ring road. The

¹⁵ In December 31 2011 the exact official number of inhabitants was 6,823 persons, with a mean age of 29.2 years, i.e. the area with the lowest mean age in Örebro (Örebro Municipality 2012). However, exactly how many people are living in Vivalla in reality is difficult to say, the real number of inhabitants probably being higher, depending on how many family members or close relatives are actually living in an apartment without being registered at that address.

original plan was to have bus stops all around the estate, but this was never implemented due to financial arguments raised by the bus company (Egerö 1979: 179). Örebro has a well-developed cycle path system all over the city, including various options for reaching the city centre. Visitors from outside Örebro can easily reach Vivalla by car via the adjacent E18/E20 motorway.

Compared to Örebro as a whole, figures on employment, income, education and other indicators of social resources show that residents in Vivalla are far below the average. The estate represents the negative extreme of socio-economic resource distribution with the homeownership housing areas of Adolfsberg and Rynninge, and a few other similar areas at the other extreme. More than half of the residents in Vivalla have an African or Asian background, but still 70 per cent of the inhabitants are Swedish citizens¹⁶. In addition, Vivalla as compared to other parts of Örebro, stands out with a larger share of foreign born inhabitants having arrived to Sweden and the estate less than five years ago¹⁷. This may demand a larger effort from ÖBO and the municipal management to integrate these people into society, although they also represent a great potential for creative meetings and future development of Swedish society. One striking figure could be picked as an illustration of the spatially segregated, or rather polarized city: poverty among children varies between 70 per cent in Vivalla and 5 per cent in Adolfsberg with 16.8 per cent being the average in Örebro.¹⁸ Indeed, this is major challenge for local politicians and the city administration.

VI.1 Why refurbishment?

Parts of the Vivalla estate have been the target for several renewal programmes during the 1990s and 2000s. On some streets small apartments have been merged into highly modern large apartments, with the aim of contributing to a more varied social mix. In another part of the area, the outdoor structure has been adapted to the needs of families with small children, and in yet another part tenants older than 55 years form the target group. The current renewal initiative is, however, more radical, as it includes refurbishing, pulling down and building new apartments, all of which is changing the physical structure. The focus on participation by the tenants in the planning process is also new, as is the focus on energy saving and other measures related to climate mitigation and cost efficiency.

As stated by the building consultant hired by the housing company, an average use of energy per household at Visgatan currently amounts to 212 kilowatt hours per square metre per year

¹⁶ See figures in Appendix V.

¹⁷ Of all Vivalla inhabitants 16 years and older and born abroad, 32,5 % had lived there less than five years. This can be compared to similar parts of Örebro, dominated by rental apartments, where the share is 19-26 %. Statistics received from Olle Kylensjö, Örebro Municipality, dated 2011-12-31.

¹⁸ An exposed family is defined as having an income less than 60 per cent of the average income of all families in Örebro, also taking into the consideration the number of children (0-17 years old) in a family (Nerikes Allehanda, 2012).

as compared to the current norm in new construction, which is 90 kilowatt hours per square metre per year¹⁹. The housing blocks at Visgatan, as in parts of Vivalla that are not being refurbished, are “bleeding energy”, an expression used by several people we have interviewed. The aim stated by the housing company is to reduce energy consumption for heating and water in the Visgatan apartments from 212 to 90 kilowatt hours per square metre per year, i.e. in line with the state norms.²⁰ Of course, this radical reduction of energy use requires substantial improvements to insulation, ventilation and technical equipment in general. Following the advice of the consultant, as well as the housing company itself, this will also require individual metering of water consumption. In addition, as original refurbishment funds were not calculated with an eye to today’s demands for radical reductions of energy use, this will cause quite substantial increases in rents.²¹

In the following we will describe and analyse the views of the planned refurbishment as expressed by three sets of actors, i.e. the local government, the housing company and the residents at Visgatan. Data consist of policy documents, interviews, and notes from meetings with the project group, and face-to-face encounters with tenants at Visgatan, the latter as reported by Cesam Foundation, hired by ÖBO to organize meetings and workshops as well as consultation with individual tenants during the planning process. The authors attended two meetings at Visgatan in June and December 2011 with about 70 residents each time, observing and documenting the discussion without personally intervening with questions and comments, although talking informally with some of the tenants before, after and during breaks in the meetings. We also attended a third meeting in June 2012. Interviews that were recorded and transcribed are listed in II.

VI.2 The voice of the local government

Several overriding plans and policy programmes define what the local government considers high priority in the municipality. We take the municipal comprehensive plan [översiktsplan] (Örebro Municipality 2010a), as a starting point, as it defines the use of land and water in the municipality as a whole in a long term-perspective. Taking its point of departure in the three commonly defined dimensions of sustainable development the plan points out citizens’ rights and duties, as well as matters of health, integration, equity and participation as important building blocks of the social dimension. The ecological dimension focuses on efforts to miti-

¹⁹ The norm takes into consideration that the temperature conditions are not the same in the North and the South of Sweden. Because of that Boverket - The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning – has divided Sweden into three climate zones. In the northern climate zone, more energy use is allowed per square metre. Örebro belongs to the southern climate zone, and is thus supposed to stick to the most demanding norm. (Boverket 2009).

²⁰ After a more thorough examination of the buildings this goal has been revised to 66 kWh per square metre per year (personal communication with Helena Hasslert 2013-02-06).

²¹ Interview with building consultant Christian Lundin, 2 November 2012. As a “quality coordinator” he is hired by the housing company to assist, supervise and control the refurbishment process at Visgatan from the planning stage to the final delivery of the new blocks and apartments.

gate climate change, whereas the economic dimension underscores the municipality's power of attraction and competitiveness towards prospective inhabitants and business interests.

The comprehensive plan and the housing policy programme (Örebro Municipality 2011) bring to the fore a larger residential mix in the whole city as the recipe to reach a social mix that may increase integration and a broader involvement in local society. This is considered an urgent matter for the local government as Örebro, once called a show-case city of housing (Egerö 1979), has become a much more segregated city. A recent study reveals that the resourceful parts of the city have had the strongest socio-economic development, while the poor neighbourhoods have undergone severe deterioration. In other words the gap between the two has widened and city has become spatially more polarized in terms of class and income (Eliasson 2009). Therefore it has become important for the local politicians to re-create the identity of the city. In a special target programme, priority is given to the development of the western parts of the city, including Vivalla, with the intention of creating a new image attracting new residents and visitors who can see for themselves the positive values in these neighbourhoods (Örebro Municipality 2009).

It is in the local climate strategy (Örebro Municipality 2010b) that the ecological dimension takes its most concrete form. The final climate goal is a 90 per cent (or more) reduction of climate emissions in the municipality as a geographical territory by 2050 as compared to 2000 mainly by using more renewable energy, and through various energy-saving measures in buildings and transport. Forcefully applying these measures in its own administration the local government itself wants to become a role model for actors in the private sector. As a sub goal the municipality also wants to decrease climate emissions within its territory by 50 per cent per inhabitant by 2020 as compared to 2000. ÖBO's commitment is to reduce its use of electricity by 26 per cent and district heating by 12 per cent between 2008 and 2020. The housing company also wants to contribute to the production of renewable energy. The project plan was to install wind turbines on two new buildings, as well as solar panels and solar cells for producing heat and electricity. However, as introducing wind turbines in the built-up environment involves quite a number of practical problems, only one small-scale turbine powering outdoor lightning is still on the agenda, not so much because of energy saving as for pedagogical purposes, i.e. showing residents the need for environmental care (Delegationen för hållbara städer 2012b).

Citizen participation in planning processes as well as in other democratic contexts is focused on the policy programme Citizens' Örebro [Medborgarnas Örebro] (1997b), where it clearly states that new developments and re-developments must be preceded by planning processes including not only planners and politicians but also tenants and developers. Local democracy has a special place in this programme, something that is, however, not that obvious in later policy programmes. Identification with place, responsibility, knowledge about society and

Swedish language, a mix of tenure forms that promotes meetings with people from a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds are also mentioned in the above-mentioned policy programmes. All this also goes for the Immigration Policy Programme (Örebro Municipality 1997a).

VI.3 The voice of the housing company

As a company owned by the municipality, ÖBO is committed to contributing to the fulfilment of the local government's housing policy. This includes acting for tenants' possibility to have a fair and solid impact on the administration of and service from the company, and also taking environmental care, for example by a decently low consumption of energy and water. ÖBO's business plan (ÖBO 2011a) contains eight goals giving the general directions for the company during the period 2012-2015. One of the goals states that "All our districts are attractive on the housing market", but at the same time points at Vivalla as "geographically isolated", a problem that has to be solved together with an increase of tenure diversity, with the aim to "strengthen the attraction in front of new groups of customers" (ÖBO 2011a: 8). Another goal is that the "composition of residents in the south-east part of Vivalla shall, by 2015, correspond to a cross section of the population in Örebro". It can be understood thereby that ÖBO considers this part of Vivalla especially segregated. The emphasis on attraction is recurrent. Thus, to "profile the various districts' positive identities" is presented as a sub-goal to the overriding goal making ÖBO "the self-evident choice" for housing in Örebro (ÖBO 2011a: 11).

With regard to environmental policy; "ÖBO takes an offensive responsibility for sustainable development of climate and environment" (ÖBO 2011a:13), for example through reduction of its CO₂ emissions by 20 per cent by 2015 as compared to 2005. This shall be achieved by self-government, i.e. mobilization of the company itself, its staff and its tenants, but also by putting demands on the company's affiliates.²²

The aims of the physical renewal of Vivalla are described in a five-step plan (ÖBO 2012:18) where the main points are; firstly to strengthen the feeling of belonging to a particular block in Vivalla instead of belonging to the Vivalla estate as such. The creation of distinct and separate spaces in the outdoor environment is considered one step towards this new sense of small- scale belonging. Secondly, this compartmentalization of space is also supposed to encourage congeniality between neighbours. Thirdly, more variation in types of apartments corresponds to the goal of a more diverse population. Fourthly, the goal to change what is described as "the physical and mental barriers" between the Vivalla estate and the adjacent areas with detached, privately owned houses is supposed to be approached by the creation of new

²² Other goals are to strengthen the company's financial status, to take care of the buildings, to make the staff proud and engaged in their work, to raise the demand of the company's apartments and services, and to raise the supply of a variety of housing in the whole municipality.

meeting places. The fifth and last aim in the Vivalla plan concerns climate smart energy efficiency, where investment in new technology and a shared responsibility are the answers. (See Appendix III).

The initiative to the renewal process on Visgatan, My Green Neighbourhood, originates from the housing company, although influenced by local government policy documents and officially conceived needs of the residents at Visgatan and Vivalla in general. Summarizing the decision taken by the ÖBO board in December 2012, two houses (23 apartments) are to be demolished, three others will be radically changed to create a common courtyard, and one new building with four or five storeys will complete the old Visgatan neighbourhood. There will also be a few terraced houses that will complete the refurbishment. The remaining 100 apartments will be thoroughly refurbished. In addition, in a later phase of the project, the plan is to build some more detached houses and a five-storey high-rise on areas that are today used as parking places.

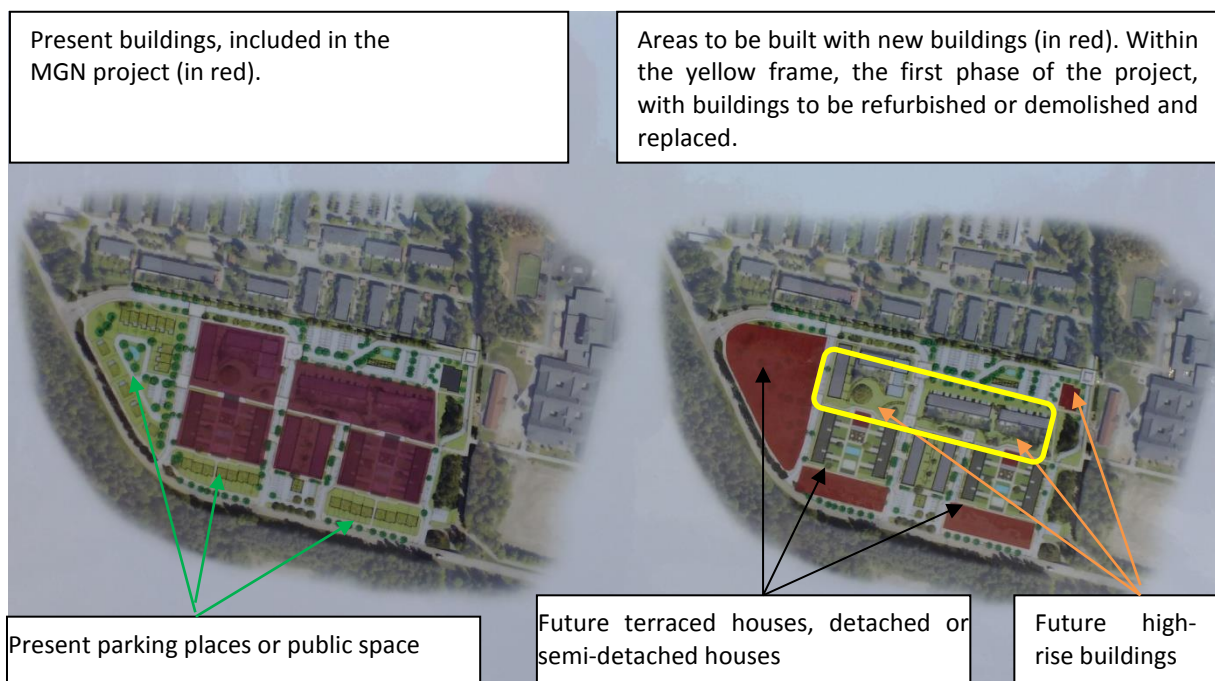


Figure 4. Illustration of present and planned situation of buildings on Visgatan as presented on the information post at Visgatan in March 2012. (Photo of ÖBO illustration on information post, our text).

Focusing on the current residents, the chairman of the company's board summarizes:

We are trying to do this refurbishment as cheaply as possible, in that sense we have listened to them [the tenants]. They have primarily been worried about too high a rise in

rent. We have answered that we will only make the most necessary changes. We will improve insulation, change windows, turn the entrances around, and make some technical improvements to the ventilation system. (Nerikes Allehanda 2011a)

The actual implementation of the decision was intended to start in autumn 2012²³. The rent rise for the present housing stock at Visgatan is calculated to be 20 per cent, which is considered too much by the tenants' association.



Figure 5. Illustration of building plans, spring 2012. Now there is only one high-rise. Instead, terraced houses are drawn in the space between the present buildings and the road. Source: ÖBO (2011c).

ÖBO has well-tested, structured routines when approaching tenants who have to leave their apartments in times of refurbishment. Especially during the late phase of the process under study, the company has been very keen to approach each household through a special removal coordinator [omflyttningssamordnare], telling them the commitment taken by the company in terms of offering an alternative apartment from its own housing stock, either within Vivalla or in another part of the city.²⁴ Sitting tenants also have the first right to return to the refurbished apartments at Visgatan. So far only about 10 households have declared their willingness to do

²³ See above footnote 2 page 9.

²⁴ Owner of more than 40 per cent of the rental housing stock in the city, ÖBO certainly has the capacity to offer alternatives in situations when major refurbishment makes it impossible to stay during the working process (Interviews with ÖBO District Manager and Refurbishment Coordinator in Vivalla).

that. Anyhow, the face-to-face contacts with each household living in those apartments to be refurbished seem to have had a calming effect, once the tenants understood the premises of removal. In an earlier stage of the planning process residents had many more worries about their fate in times of refurbishment, and there were those who thought they were going to be just thrown out of their apartments without any alternative offered.²⁵

VI.4 The voice(s) of the residents

The third group of actors in the renewal process are the present tenants, whose participation is paid attention to in the local government policy programmes referred to above, in ÖBO's own business plan, and in My Green Neighbourhood. In this case the decision on changes in the detailed plan on the area, the first administrative step, was already taken by the municipality's building committee in November 2009 (Stadsbyggnad Örebro 2009a and b), long before the tenants on Visgatan were informed about the renewal project. The tenants have a legal right to comment on a detailed plan before it is decided by the municipality's building committee, but as the refurbishment process was in a very early stage, the common resident did not note this formal step. Thus, in practice, the residents did not have any say on the broad outline of the plan.

In the beginning of 2011 the ÖBO process for Visgatan came to the point. A project group was formed, with participants from ÖBO and representatives of the tenants in the form of a couple of people from the local affiliation of The Swedish Union of Tenants (see Appendix IV). As a link between the residents at Visgatan and ÖBO the latter had already in 2010 consulted the Cesam Foundation. Having a tradition of process orientated community work the Foundation's programme declaration states the following mission (Cesam Foundation 2012):

- Advisory service to promote community development, active citizenship and participatory democracy.
- Supporting processes in local initiative, project and long-term community development.
- Supply training for process orientated work and techniques for democratic meetings.
- Supervision/guidance for process orientated work and community workers.

Cesam was hired by ÖBO to give residents at Visgatan opportunities to participation, influence and responsibility with regard to the planned refurbishment. Notably, the assignment was explicitly given only for the process, with no reference to the content of the planned re-

²⁵ Source: Interviews with removal coordinator Helena Hasslert, and notes taken from meetings with the project group, attended also by representatives of the local tenants' association [hyresgästföreningen], and the Cesam consultant, who all seem to verify the calming effect of the face-to-face contacts and the routines applied by the housing company. The authors of this report can also verify this picture on the basis of attendance at open meetings with residents at Visgatan (see also general information of sources used above in Appendix I).

refurbishment.²⁶ The Cesam consultant is very keen to stress his role as a neutral “process maker” without any intention to influence the residents in any direction, but only to note and communicate their wishes and demands to the housing company, and to facilitate dialogue between the two. To accomplish this dialogue open meetings were organized every Thursday (from November 2010 to May 2011) at the Visgatan community premises (an empty apartment was used for this). In January-February 2011 personal visits were made to the tenants’ homes by Cesam and a Union of Tenants representative to get their opinions on the housing standard, inside and outside the apartment. In that way 80 people in 65 apartments were approached. Furthermore, Cesam arranged in October 2011, in cooperation with ÖBO, six meetings with the tenants on Visgatan. In these meetings tenants from one, two or three buildings where similar measures were to be taken, were invited to get information about the architects’ proposals for the refurbishment and the construction of new common areas. The tenants could also have their say and ask questions. Two open-house meetings followed in November, where the tenants could write down questions and proposals. In the six meetings 48 out of the 123 households participated; in the first open-house meeting 9 tenants came with questions, and in the second 6 tenants.²⁷ In addition to these meetings, ÖBO and the Union of Tenants had arranged open meetings in May, June and December 2010, with information about the refurbishment process.

The notes from the Cesam activities reveal that the tenants’ thoughts and worries mainly concerned everyday issues. In the “door-talks” the purpose was to get the project known among the tenants, and invite them to a continuous dialogue. The notes from the talks reveal opinions on problems with improper traffic and insecurity, problems in the apartments, such as draught from the windows, opinions on how to manage the common laundry room, the bicycle store room, the waste handling and the playground. The notes do not say anything about reactions to the refurbishment project as such.

From the perspective of most of the tenants in this early stage of the project, before the architects’ sketches were available, the plans were quite abstract. This could explain why, in the door-talks, focus came to be on the present not on the future situation. This is at least the conclusion drawn in the project group meeting in February 2011 where the result from the house-to-house campaign was discussed. The short interviews revealed that many tenants seemed to be quite satisfied living on Visgatan, and that they were only prepared to pay a small rent increase because of the renewal programme. Some were even suspicious and believed that ÖBO had a hidden agenda (ÖBO 2011b). Although the rent is expected to rise by about 20 per cent, which is a rather low level if compared to other similar renewal programmes in the city, it is a high level if your family income is low, as is the case for many of the Vivalla inhabitants (see Appendix V). The Cesam consultant, as well as leading people from the refurbishment pro-

²⁶ Source: interviews with Per Hector, Cesam (2012-05-14) and Peter Hjalmarsson, ÖBO (2012-02-14).

²⁷ Source: notes taken and documented in written reports by Cesam, See Appendix I.

gramme, argues that the rent rise has become an obstacle for engagement by many tenants. What is meant is that any one of the tenants that participates in some of the dialogue groups also feels that if he or she affirms measures proposed by ÖBO then he/she also accepts a rent rise, something that may arouse criticism from the neighbours.

The topics raised at these meetings and face-to-face contacts were until June 2011 exclusively about everyday matters, such as the level of rents after refurbishment, how to keep one's "own" outside lot, how to keep the green character of the environment, how to improve the sorting of garbage, and the function of laundry, ventilation and indoor climate, how to organize the removal process etc. In June 2011 the Visgatan residents were invited to participate in a public meeting organized by the Union of Tenants in Örebro, and to have their say on alternative proposals from four architect firms. The latter provoked loud protests from the 70 or so participants at the meeting, as the illustrations from the architects were rather visionary and not easy to comprehend. Obviously, the residents were not prepared for such radical propositions, as they had so far been informed only that improvements to the existing housing stock were on the agenda. Pictures of the four alternative architect proposals were put on tables and the participants were asked to mark with green or red slips which of them they liked or disliked. Almost all green slips were pasted on the alternative only proposing an upgrading of the existing housing stock and the outdoor environment.²⁸

The clash between tenants' earlier understanding of the project as an upgrading of the apartment standard and the environment on the one hand, and the housing company's plan, at the time, to pull down two houses, turn two around, and build two new on the other, became obvious. The strongest protests expressed at the meeting came from tenants who had lived on Visgatan for a long time.²⁹ However, taking a broader look at the tenants' opinions – based on observations at several meetings and in interviews – more positive, or at least tolerable, views on the refurbishment plans were also visible, i.e. the picture then becomes more nuanced. For example, fairly recently arrived Somalian tenants with many children seemed to be more positive to the company's plans.³⁰ An information post on the street, before the meeting in June 2011 showed pictures of the architects' proposals for the refurbishment and asked the tenants for their opinions about the renewal programme.

²⁸ This picture is verified by Per Hector (Cesam) who would now rather recommend that the housing company present the wider agenda of refurbishment at an earlier stage, thereby avoiding the risk of raising false promises among the residents.

²⁹ One tenant, an 81 year old woman, had lived in the same apartment since 1968, the year of construction.

³⁰ Cf. reference to rebuilding coordinator Helena Hasslert above, section IV.3.



Figure 6. Information post on Visgatan. Photo taken in June 2011.

On ÖBO's information post on Visgatan:

In red (written by ÖBO):

"We want to know your opinion!"

In black (probably written by some anonymous tenant(s))

"But you don't listen!"

"Don't pull down Visgatan!"

"We won't move!"

Before ÖBO's board was to take the final decision in December 2011, telling which houses to pull down and rebuild etc., the tenants had the opportunity to meet some of the politicians on the board at a well-attended open meeting (73 participants). Again, a distance between the politicians' aim to reach a better social mix through a variety of apartments and the tenants' worries about rent rises and urge for a more small-scale renewal programme became obvious.³¹

Notably, when inaugurating the physical refurbishment process in February 2013, the Managing Director of ÖBO stated that the company

does *not* have the ambition to make Vivalla a more socially mixed area – at least not in the *short term*. It is basically a matter of jobs – if more people in Vivalla get a job at the same time as we make it more attractive, people will talk about how good it is to live here and then perhaps more people having a job will move here. But that is not our explicit ambition. (Managing Director Ulf Rohlén, as interviewed in Nerikes Allehanda 15 February 2013, part 1, page 10; our italics).

However, in ÖBO's business plan the need of less housing segregation and increased integration is underscored. This will be achieved by making the less popular parts of the town more attractive for new groups of customers. A quantified goal is that the composition of the population in the southwest part of Vivalla (i.e. where Visgatan is situated) shall correspond to a cross section of the population in the town of Örebro. This goal is to be reached by 2015 (ÖBO 2011a p. 8)!

At first glance the managing director's statement could be seen as contradictory to the company's official goal in the business plan, but probably it is a matter of different time scales. The most acute problem to solve is to get the renovation started, and to provide job opportuni-

³¹ Notes taken by the authors of the report, Gustavsson & Elander 2011-12-05. Cf. short news article in local newspaper, Nerikes Allehanda (2011b).

ties for unemployed inhabitants in Vivalla, according to a special agreement in the procurement process of building entrepreneurs. The business plan has a longer time horizon, although not even the year 2015 is very far away. Of course, a radical improvement of the unemployment situation in Swedish society might increase employment among the people living in Vivalla, thus making the social composition of the city district less different from the city at large than currently, although this scenario is most unlikely. Another option for the city leadership might be to revise their mixing strategy in favour of approving and making a point of the area's multicultural and potentially dynamic composition, thus acknowledging Vivalla's right to keep its own profile in terms of social and ethnic composition. However, due to the hegemonic policy discourse, this is neither very likely.

VI.5 The project group as a spider in the web

Policies directed at so-called vulnerable neighbourhoods³² are often packaged as single projects specified to a few policy targets and limited for quite a short time. Although they may be at least partially successful when evaluated on their own terms – e.g. on what they accomplish during the given time period in terms of money spent on “this and that” - from a long-time perspective they make few impacts on the overall situation (Hertting 2003: 20-22 and *passim*). Thus, area-based policies like the many projects directed at vulnerable neighbourhoods in Swedish cities “might succeed in helping individuals but [they] will not succeed in changing the socio-economic profile or the structural position of the targeted areas [and] will therefore also fail in achieving the overall goal of ‘breaking’ segregation.” (Andersson et al. 2010: 251)

Looking at My Green Neighbourhood it is marketed and driven as a project of a different kind, as it is integrated with the plans of a housing company, as a first, pilot step in the direction of refurbishing the whole estate or city district, comprising 2,400 apartments. In this sense it is not, as one may call it, “just one of those many projects that will pop up for a short time and then fade away”, i.e. it is not a “one occasion project stand”. As the municipal housing company itself is the prime mover of the project it is also eager to accomplish long-term robustness by planting the project in the broader context of city politics, Vivalla at large, and its residents and resident organizations. To this aim, a project group led by the district manager of the housing company was set up right from the start, and included representatives of the tenants' union (one representing the district level, and two tenants at Visgatan representing the residential level) as well as a few other people from the ÖBO staff, a technical consultant and the Cesam consultant. (The organizational structure of the project is visualized in Appen-

³² In Swedish “utsatta bostadsområden”.

dix VI). In spring 2012 one representative of Somaliland Association,³³ himself tenant at Visgatan, was also included (see Appendix IV).

The notes from the project group reveal that a number of practical issues have been discussed, such as how to organise information and dialogue activities. Different opinions on the design and scope of the refurbishment have been discussed; technical and other experts have also brought their knowledge to the group. One example is the municipal cycling coordinator, who was invited to the project group to talk about how to inspire Vivalla residents to cycle. Even if the project and project group include several actors, other organizations have also been engaged to a small extent, for example KomTek and Unga Örnar. The first refers to evening courses for children where they can learn about technology and entrepreneurship. These courses are run by the municipality, at a low cost for the children's parents. The latter is the junior organization within the labour movement. Both these organizations have been engaged in activities directed towards the children in the neighbourhood.

In late autumn 2012 there was a reconstruction of the project group, resulting in a tripartite split focusing on three different topics; dialogue with the tenants, building/construction and employment of youth.³⁴ As concluded in notes from a meeting with the project group: "It is all about three parallel issues that have to be communicated to each other. They are all parts of the project and interdependent" (Project group meeting 2012-10-04). Aside from these three groups the housing company and the principal building company (Skanska) is establishing a common, perpetual construction hub at Visgatan, including staff available to answer questions from residents and other interested parties.

To summarize, from the beginning the horizon of the project group was way beyond the formal end of the project My Green Neighbourhood. At least from the side of the housing company the project was just a starter for a process of refurbishing the whole of Vivalla during years to come. Obviously, neither the representatives of the tenants' association nor many residents at Visgatan understood this until the meeting in June 2011, when the four architect proposals were visualized on an outdoor poster stand and aroused loud protests. However, information to the tenants from the housing company on the final decision in December 2011, and especially about the details regarding removal has calmed residents' protests. All in all, the project gradually came to be seen as one more step in a long history of perpetual refurbishment although, certainly on the part of the housing company, not just that! (cf. footnote 13, page 17, and the Post Script below)

³³ Somaliland Association in Örebro – one of some 70 associations located in Vivalla (ÖBO i Vivalla 2013) - was born in 1997 and has between 700 and 900 members (Somaliland 2012). Organizing voluntary homework support for school children is one important activity.

³⁴ Notes from project group meeting 2012-08-21.

Considering the huge economic, environmental and social challenges touched upon in section V for ÖBO, as for all other publicly owned housing companies in Sweden, My Green Neighbourhood is definitely more than a passing project. New demands on these companies to compete with private landlords on more businesslike terms combined with government pressures for climate mitigation initiatives put a heavier stress on them than ever before. In addition, increasing socio-spatial polarization in Swedish towns and cities also forces local governments to address poverty, unemployment and social unrest in housing estates like Vivalla. Strikingly, to symbolize the transfer of My Green Neighbourhood to something more enduring than a passing project, this first part of the Vivalla estate to be refurbished has recently been re-labelled Hjärstaskogen [the Hjärsta Forest], i.e. part of the forest strip so far dividing the large multi-family estate/district from the detached, self-owned housing district of Hjärsta. It thereby also signals the dream of the politicians in the housing company board to “open up” Vivalla to the rest of the city.

VII CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS FOR FUTURE REFUBISHMENT?

The state supported, locally driven redevelopment project My Green Neighbourhood wants to combine reduction of energy use and climate impact with an increase of residents’ participation and identification with their neighbourhood. There are also expectations on the side of the political leadership that refurbishment will attract people from other parts of the city to settle in Vivalla, thus counteracting a long trend towards social segregation and polarization in the city. The plan is that experience gained from the pilot project will then be transferred step by step to the rest of the company’s 2,400 apartments on the Vivalla estate.

Assessing the prospect of success for reaching these goals is precarious only on the basis of the planning process up to the final decision by the housing company in December 2011. However, with this reservation in mind, we will still draw some preliminary conclusions addressing the questions raised in the introduction of the report. Although the aspirations included in the three buzzwords My Green Neighbourhood are partly overlapping we will mainly organize our concluding reflections around them, starting with Green (energy saving, climate mitigation and green environment), followed by My (residents’ identification with Visgatan and Vivalla), and Neighbourhood (social inclusion, integration and cohesion). However, as residents’ participation is a crucial target both for the planning process and for other activities initiated in the refurbishment process it will be focused as a separate issue. Finally we will also return to and reflect upon the “big question” as to whether initiatives like My Green Neighbourhood have a potential to contribute to sustainable development more widely.

First, the aim to decrease energy consumption substantially has a success potential. In the first place this is due to technological investments in ventilation, insulation, heating, water and sewage systems. However, whether the lifestyles of the tenants themselves will change, apart

from what comes more or less automatically as a result of the technological innovations, is an open question. This has to do with a number of circumstances not directly related to the housing estate as such. Consumption profiles among households differ widely and cannot be foreseen only by reference to their housing situation (Gustavsson & Elander 2013; Spaargaren & Osterveer 2010; Bradley 2009; Jackson 2006; Stern 2000). Nevertheless, there is a potential for the housing company to implement a long-term strategy of using their technological investments to inspire the Vivalla tenants to more climate friendly energy behaviour in their everyday lives, for example through individual metering of their energy consumption on a day to day basis. However, this might have severe implications for a lot of the households on the estate that have many children and low incomes, i.e. there is a risk that higher costs of energy consumption will make it difficult for many households to stay in the area, when considering the increase in rent due to refurbishment. In a broader perspective this points to a crucial paradox in policies of this kind, i.e. due to individual metering of energy use (laundry and heat) people whose overall consumption profile (including travelling and lifestyle in general) is comparably the lowest in society may not be able to afford paying higher costs for energy consumption. Households in Million Homes districts often have larger families, and they are more often unemployed and/or have lower incomes than households in middle or upper class housing districts. However, as the housing company plans to introduce individual metering only for hot and cold water the economic consequences for a household could be comparatively modest³⁵

Second, what about creating a new identity, “a sense of place” [kvarterskänsla] with Visgatan, and, possibly, Vivalla in general? This is problematic as some of the residents, especially those who have lived there for many years, are rather positive to the current look of Visgatan and its vicinity, and – in some cases very - sceptical to the refurbishment decided by the company. Important for the positive identification with the area is its green embedding. In other words, these tenants felt that they *were* already living in a green environment, and would prefer proper management of their neighbourhood and apartments rather than the more radical changes raised during the planning process. Due to increasing rents and inconvenience during the evacuation process it is even unlikely that many of the current tenants will ever return to the neighbourhood³⁶. Thus, one cannot exclude the risk that the rather positive identity so far felt with the Visgatan neighbourhood by a number of tenants will just fade away, leaving the question of identity with the refurbished area to be answered by the future residents, about whom we still know nothing. Maybe this is an unintentional effect of My Green Neighbour-

³⁵ Individual metering of electricity consumption is already the norm in Sweden. District heating is commonly included in rent.

³⁶ Preliminary data indicate that only about ten of the evacuated households in the five first buildings (with approximately 75 apartments in total) will return (oral information from administrator at ÖBO, Hasslert, August 2012).

hood, i.e. sacrificing the old tenants' identification with today's Visgatan in favour of a refurbishment meant to attract newcomers from within or outside Vivalla?

Third, will there be another social mix, thus making Vivalla more like the average of the city in terms of socio-economic structure? The answer depends on the point of reference we choose. Addressing the expectations raised by the political leadership in the city it is rather doubtful that My Green Neighbourhood will attract resourceful people from other parts of the city, i.e. "open up" the Vivalla estate as repeated by local councillors at one of the open meetings at Visgatan.³⁷ On the other hand, we find the ambition expressed by the chief district manager of the housing company more viable, i.e. creating opportunities for housing careers *within* the Vivalla estate. This is an interesting difference of opinion. The politicians (notably representing both the local government and the housing company board) obviously have the idea that segregation in the city can be counteracted by the in-migration of resourceful people from outside Vivalla, whereas the focus of the housing company lies rather on trying to keep the inhabitants of Vivalla within in the area, not least in the hope that they become more integrated in society in terms of employment, income, language skills etc., something that is largely outside the influence of the company itself (cf. statement by Managing Director, as quoted above, page 29). The latter is a more challenging option as demonstrated by well documented research on segregated housing areas in Sweden more generally, showing that people who have been more integrated in society tend to leave areas like Vivalla (Andersson et al., 2010). In other words, the Vivalla district company manager seems more eager to create opportunities for inside housing careers, thereby diminishing the flight of more successful households in terms of employment and income.

Fourth, did the tenants at Visgatan have an opportunity to participate in the planning process and influence the way Visgatan is going to be refurbished? This is, at least, what the representatives of the tenants believed until the final stage of the planning process, i.e. until June 2011. Indeed, the housing company took the strongly negative reactions against the most radical architect proposals at face value, and finally landed on a decision of a comparatively modest change. However, as compared to the main priority of the tenants, i.e. to freshen up their apartments and the environment "on its own terms", even this "retreat" from the company's original plans seemed too radical for many of them. Thus, in terms of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein 1969) we may classify the position of the tenants as "consultative", with a tokenist bias, i.e. at the medium rung of the ladder.

In other words, most tenants would have preferred a change in terms of maintenance and modest improvements to the environment, but they were also listened to by the housing company when it decided not to accept the most radical changes proposed by some of the architect

³⁷ Notes taken by the authors of the report, Gustavsson & Elander 2011-12-05, and in interviews with two politicians on the ÖBO board.

firms, i.e. there was some kind of a dialogue, although with clear limitations on the part of the housing company. For the local government and for the company, maintenance and improved environment were not enough, as this is planned to be the start of a long-term redressing of the whole of Vivalla. Representatives of the Tenants' Union on their side were placed in a somewhat contradictory situation, on the one hand speaking for cautious refurbishment in line with demands of the sitting tenants, on the other hand, as members of the steering committee, in favour of changes that might attract new residents in the long run.

The Tenants' Union thus had to satisfy needs and demands from current and future tenants representing two different time scales. This dilemma illustrates the theoretically grounded argument put forward by Dallas Rogers, that the

lived experience of public housing tenants is intricately connected to the spatio-temporalities that they inhabit (Fairclough 1995; Harvey 1996). These experiences accumulate from the localized social practices of public housing estate management, but also from the rhythm and pace of their daily lives and their interpersonal experiences that occur both inside and outside of redevelopment projects (Osborne 1995; Fairclough 2003). (Rogers 2012: 31)

In line with this, in our case there was something of a clash between the public housing estate management and a number of tenants whose daily lives and interpersonal experiences expressed a more positive view in relation to their homes than assumed by the company.

The position of the sitting tenants can be illustrated by a time scale showing the different phases and levels of the planning process (see Appendix VII). When the tenants were invited to participate in the planning process, the local government programme, comprehensive plan and detailed plan had already been decided and the remaining space for influence was limited to matters relating to one's own apartment, e.g. the choice of wallpaper, how to keep one's "own" outside lot, the sorting of garbage, and the function of laundry, ventilation and indoor climate, the removal process etc. At meetings attended by the authors the most talkative tenants expressed reactions indicating that they found themselves being victims of "tokenism" rather than having a real opportunity to influence the outcome of the planning process. In line with this, we also found tenants saying they were irritated by the extended planning process including a lot of meetings without decisions being taken.

As argued by Monno and Khakee (2012) in a recent article, "tokenist" participation, strongly focusing upon information and consultation, is very much in line with a depoliticized consensus-orientated trend in planning, thus contrasting radical, "agonistic" planning with a real potential for influence and empowerment on side of the participants. Obviously some of the more engaged tenants tended to feel that the housing company had not played with open cards, initially giving the impression that the space open for tenants to have an influence upon

the final decision was much bigger than it turned out to be. There were also complaints that the tenants were not really informed about this until it was too late in the process.

Finally, can local interventions like My Green Neighbourhood contribute to sustainable development? This is a very wide and tricky question to answer, but let us at least give some kind of an answer, starting with the ecological dimension, in particular the aspect of climate change. Considering the current situation of a widening gap between what has been done and what needs to be done in responding to climate change (Betsill & Bulkeley 2007), and that we are now, according to some scholars, rather facing a dominant governance system characterised as “sustaining the unsustainable” (Blühdorn 2011; Catney and Doyle 2011; Swyngedouw 2010) at least the technological investments, if implemented on a large scale (in Sweden, at any rate, there are about 600,000 apartments in the Million Homes stock in need of refurbishment), would certainly contribute to a reduction in energy demand in Swedish housing. Combined with sustained efforts to inspire the tenants to climate friendly behaviour in a broader sense there is also a potential for additional climate mitigation gains in the future. There is also clear potential for economic gains, i.e. the housing company will take long-term, financial responsibility for its housing stock, and the tenants may profit from lower energy costs, although an increase in rents will also follow as a consequence of the investments in basic, material functions. Planned conversion to individually metered water costs is also likely to have negative effects upon the budgets of unemployed or low-income households with large families (Bradley 2009).

However, although the challenges of climate change have a potential to be successfully mitigated on the scale of a multi-family housing estate in a well-off country in the global North, what about “social sustainability”? To answer this question is even more complicated than the one on ecological and economic sustainability. Thus, if there are techniques for measuring a reduction or an increase in quantities of CO₂ and for measuring economic gains for the housing company, there are no comparable yardsticks for “social sustainability” as vividly illustrated by an increasing number of recently published articles and book chapters. For example, Dempsey et al. (2011) argues that “social sustainability is neither an absolute nor a constant [it] has to be considered as a dynamic concept, which will change over time (from year to year or decade to decade) in a place”. And Magnus Boström in a guest editorial of a special issue of the journal *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy* argues that the

inherent vagueness of both the sustainability concept in general and social sustainability in particular cannot be fully overcome [it needs] to be framed, filled with content, and interpreted from time to time and place to place. In the absence of active engagement it is merely an empty conceptual space (Boström 2012: 11).

Taking these arguments literally, the focal points of social sustainability raised by My Green Neighbourhood in the planning process are those we have just highlighted earlier in this sec-

tion, i.e. place identity, social inclusion/integration, and participation. There are no simple quantitative measures to assess the record of social sustainability; this is something that has to be monitored and evaluated at the street level in a dialogue between doers and researchers.³⁸

So, once again, what is the potential of My Green Neighbourhood and similar projects for the prospects of future urban sustainable development? Do such collaborative, participatory planning efforts have a potential for environmental engineering, i.e. by combining social and technological innovations? Can these efforts inspire residents to make them “behave cleanly”, maybe even without “thinking green”, and at the same time strengthen their positive identification with the neighbourhood? What are the potentials and limits of deliberative interventions of this kind?

As argued by Lidskog & Elander (2010) and many others (for example Betsill & Bulkeley 2006; Hooghe & Marks 2003) climate change and the environment have to be addressed in a multi-level policy framework taking a broad view, acknowledging economic, political and social dimensions and their interrelationship with ecological concerns. Considering the complexity of climate change in all its aspects there is not, and could not be, one ultimate governance fix for meeting such a challenge. What we have, and must live with, is a patchwork of partly overlapping assemblies, located at different levels and sectors, and thus representing different spheres of authority. Government institutions have to establish links to the parallel structures of informal, voluntary associations such as social movements and environmental associations, as well as to for-profit companies, individuals and households. Participation and deliberation within the framework of representative institutions may be supportive in the struggle for a less carbon dependent society, although these mechanisms may also be, and are, indeed, being used for counterstrategies, boosting economic growth and an ever-increasing excessive consumption in the global North.

Nevertheless, and disregarding a striking backlash of the post-Rio hype for global climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the dismal reactions post COP 15³⁹, local initiatives like My Green Neighbourhood do have the potential to become one, albeit minor, contribution in that struggle. In other words, ecologically and economically motivated improvements in the housing stock could be combined with social innovations implying positive effects on social inclusion and integration at the same time as the image of the estate gets a face-lift in the eyes of residents as well as visitors and outside spectators.

³⁸ In an ongoing, parallel study we address the concept of “social sustainability”, and how it has been approached in My Green Neighbourhood and seven other projects supported by the Delegation for Sustainable Cities (Gustavsson & Elander 2013, forthcoming).

³⁹ “Hopenhagen” became “Flophenhagen” as bluntly formulated by one critic cited in Blühdorn (2011: 36).

POST-SCRIPT: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD – VIVALLA AS A TARGET OF A NEVER-ENDING PARADE OF PROJECTS?

Renewal programmes in residential areas like Vivalla are not a new invention. On the contrary, problems and weaknesses in the physical and social environment seemed to appear quite soon in the Million Homes areas. In the frame of a national Campaign for Urban Renewal in 1980-1981 motives and means for urban renewal were raised (Projekt Vivalla n.d.). This campaign caused the local government in Örebro to start a renewal project in the area, foremost to deal with the social qualities, and this less than ten years after the building of Vivalla was finished. The main problem identified was that the demand for large apartments was bigger than the supply, with the effect that families with children tended to move out from Vivalla. (Projekt Vivalla n.d.)

Five different ideas on how to enlarge the apartments were proposed. One extra room could be added to apartments on the ground floor or the first floor by extensions, imaginatively called a “rucksack” or respectively a “(nesting) box”. On the gable a “shoulder bag” could be added, and on the (flat) roof a “summit cabin” could be built, adding two extra rooms and a roof garden to the apartment below. Some apartment buildings with balcony access could be rebuilt to two-storey detached houses. The existing buildings could also be supplemented with new buildings on empty parking spaces. Of these ideas, the “rucksacks” and the “boxes” can actually be seen in Vivalla, and some apartment buildings have been rebuilt into detached houses. The other ideas have remained as just ideas.

The local government invested SEK 1 million (in today’s prices about SEK 3 million or approximately EUR 350,000) in the project that was governed by a project group with representatives of ÖBO’s predecessor Stiftelsen Hyresbostäder (also with municipal ownership), the municipality and the Tenants’ Union. Another aim of the project was to initiate a dialogue with the residents in Vivalla. For example, the project group invited the tenants to a number of local meetings in the blocks where a catalogue of renewal ideas was presented and discussed. However, the project group in a report sadly remarks:

The visiting frequency was very low. Looking back we understand why. After years with a spirit of caretaking by the management of the public housing, you [i. e. the tenants] do not expect to really be able to influence changes. This, in combination with the fact that most [tenants] experience Vivalla as relatively unproblematic, explains why people do not prioritize an evening meeting with a discussion about this issue. (Projekt Vivalla (n. d.: 6)

The lessons learnt and reported in this early renewal project were not easily visible. One experience was that one should start the dialogue with the tenants and the Tenants’ Union as early as possible in the process, and pose concrete questions about concrete ideas to the residents. A

negative reaction from tenants to a new idea doesn't necessarily mean that the idea is bad, was another lesson. It might instead require some more argumentation and discussion. To start renewal by selecting one block instead of targeting the whole estate was another lesson. In the end one block in the south-eastern part of Vivalla was chosen for renewal (just opposite the present My Green Neighbourhood project!). Finally, the project group reflected over the difference in outcome between top-down and bottom-up initiated projects. The Vivalla project was considered a top-down project:

The Vivalla project is an example of such work that has been initiated by the local government and then "imposed" on the residents. (Projekt Vivalla n.d.: 14)

However, the project group argued for a bottom-up process in the future. This would demand active tenants in an environment that welcomes changes, and makes change possible (Projekt Vivalla n.d.: 14). As shown in our study My Green Neighbourhood is not the child of demands from the present tenants, but an initiative taken by the municipal housing company in line with its long-term plan for a thorough re-development of Vivalla as a whole. In this respect, My Green Neighbourhood is, indeed, a top-down project, although with an eye to meet needs and possible demands of future residents without sacrificing those of the sitting tenants.

To summarize, more than 30 years ago the lack of large apartments and the out-migration of families with children was the problem to be solved by physical measures, i.e. by adding extra space to existing buildings. The Vivalla Centre with shops and public services was also in need of refurbishment. In addition, energy saving measures were on the agenda. Thus, Vivalla had to be more sustainable in all three dimensions, although that concept was not in use at the time. The top-down process became questioned, and the tenants seemed not to identify themselves with the image of Vivalla as conceived by the planners and the housing company.

Vivalla in new (!) renewal 1987

Only a few years later, in 1987, another renewal programme for Vivalla was launched: "Vivalla in renewal" [Vivalla i förnyelse]. This time the initiative came from the sub-municipal council [kommundelsnämnden]⁴⁰, and a steering group was formed with politicians and civil servants, ÖBO and the Tenants' Union. The extension in financing and time was similar to the earlier project, SEK 1.4 million and two years. In 1989 an evaluation report concludes that the out-migration from Vivalla has stopped, and that the number of inhabitants is now *increasing* (Wahlberg 1990). The Vivalla Centre is going to be refurbished and a 12-storey apartment

⁴⁰ At the time Örebro had a system with sub-municipal councils [kommundelsnämnder] responsible for one or several policy areas in a municipal district. Responsibility covered not all municipal functions, but mainly the 'soft' sectors such as culture, primary education and social services. The sub-municipal councils in Örebro were abandoned in 2002.

building and two other apartment buildings, all adjacent to the centre, are going to complete the renewal of the commercial and service centre, as will also an outdoor swimming pool.

As stated by the sub-municipal council the background to this initiative is that, in spite of positive qualities in the neighbourhood and high ambitions by the municipality, “they thought they were stuck in all problems that arose” (Wahlberg 1990: 4). Alongside out-migration, there were now other problems highlighted, such as a large share of empty apartments, drug problems among youngsters, vandalism in the centre, high costs for social subsidies, a large share of single parents in need of economic support, and an extensive need of extra support for children in day care and schools. Notably, this was before the wave of in-migration starting in the 1990s (Andersson et al.: 2010: 249).

All this called for several measures. The renewal of the apartments should answer to the need of the tenants and, in order to strengthen the social networks between the residents, some sort of self-administration should be tried. The social workers should change their methods to be more preventive, in cooperation with the residents. The evaluation report targets the project process and the steering group, not the result of the project. It underscores the learning process in the group, and the development of knowledge about Vivalla and its uniqueness, its problems and possibilities. Especially important is to “create conditions for meaningful meetings – in this case with the inhabitants” (Wahlberg 1990: 31) As concluded by the evaluator, the people in the steering group are not the ones that should define the problems, these should be defined together with the tenants.

And here we go again!

“1.5 billion will give Vivalla a new look. ÖBO and Skanska are going to pull down, renovate and build new” was the headline in Örebroar’n, a local weekly newspaper, on 20 February 2013. The chairman of the housing company board informs the reader that the Visgatan refurbishment (My Green Neighbourhood, or more exactly the Hjärsta Forest) is only the first phase of a planned ten-year investment in Vivalla at large. Loans will finance the investment and then be paid back by rent increases, although the chairman says “we have listened to tenants’ concerns and will renovate as little as possible in order to keep rents down” (Örebroar’n 2013).

The two partners (ÖBO and the construction company Skanska) mark their social responsibility by telling that they plan to employ between 50 and 80 residents of Vivalla to work with building, logistics and transport. This is a nice example of an effort to combine the company’s long-term financial commitment with an attempt to meet social needs and demands from residents on the estate. As shown earlier in this report, the ecological dimension of sustainability is also given priority through a number of energy saving measures incorporated in the building process. All in all the investment plans confirm the picture of My Green Neighbourhood as only the starter of a long-term effort to give Vivalla a new look, i.e. a more positive identity

in the eyes of residents as well as visitors and outside spectators.⁴¹ Thus, as far as we can see at the time of writing, My Green Neighbourhood should *not* be disregarded as just one more number in a never-ending parade of temporary projects.

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⁴¹ On its website ÖrebroBostäder presents Hjärstaskogen [the Hjärsta Forest] quarter as the first step towards the New Vivalla, illustrated by a blueprint of the area, and a photo showing the chairman of the company board inaugurating the quarter when pointing at a new logo (Online: Det nya Vivalla-www.obo.se).

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Photos: Eva Gustavsson Maps: www.eniro.se

APPENDIX I List of Interviews and other interaction with participants in My Green Neighbourhood plus official documents from the local government.

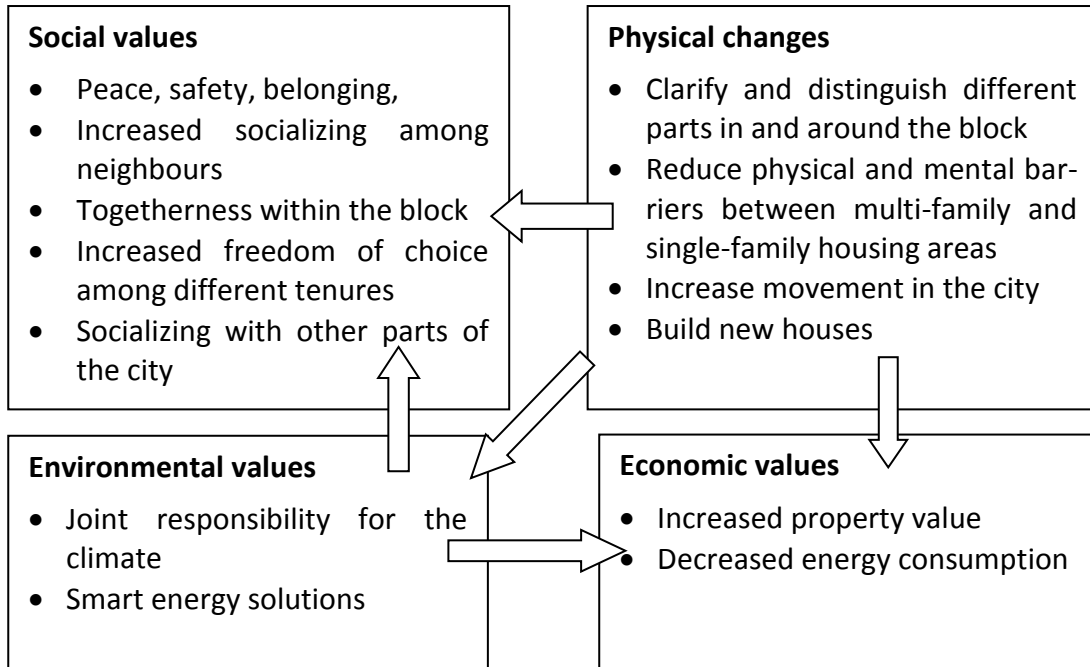
Actor	Represented by	Date
Local government Örebro Municipality	Documents (policies, strategies)	Initial document studies
ÖBO political board	Karin Sundin, chair, Rasmus Persson, deputy chair	Interview April 4, 2012
ÖBO staff	Anna-Carin Bohman Magnusson, development strategist	Continuous dialogue
	Peter Hjalmarsson, district manager Vivalla	Interview March 11, 2012
	Anders Karlsson, local housing manager with special responsibility for Visgatan	Interview April 3, 2012
	Helena Hasslert, refurbishing coordinator (Removal coordinator)	Interview August 15, 2012
Cesam	Per Hector Cesam's reports from meetings with groups of tenants	Interview May 14, 2012
ByggKomm	Christian Lundin, building consultant	Interview November 2, 2012
The Union of Tenants (HGF), district level	Kenny Nilsson, former elected representative	Interview April 27, 2012
The Union of Tenants (HGF), district level	Ali Quadiri, staff member at HGF [verksamhetsutvecklare]	Interview April 12, 2012
The Union of Tenants (HGF), residential level (Visgatan)	Anonymous 1 (female tenant) Anonymous 2 (male tenant)	Interview June 26, 2012
Tenant on Visgatan	Abdihakim Jama, also chairman of the Somaliland organization in Örebro	Interview May 22, 2012
Tenants on Visgatan	Tenants participating in open meetings on Visgatan arranged by HGF	Observation and conversation June 16, 2011 Observation December 5, 2011
Tenants on Visgatan	Tenants participating in an open house meeting arranged by ÖBO	Observation and conversation June 4, 2012
Project group	Project group meetings Notes from project group meetings from February 2010 and forward	Observation June 10, 2012 Observation August 21, 2012

APPENDIX II The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency's [Naturvårdsverket] specified goals for "a well built environment".

- The built environment will provide aesthetic experiences and well-being and offer a wide range of housing, workplaces, services and cultural activities that give everybody the opportunity to live a full and stimulating life, while reducing everyday transport needs.
- The cultural, historical and architectural heritage in the form of buildings and built environments, as well as places and landscapes of special value, will be protected and enhanced.
- A sustainable urban structure will be developed, in connection both with the siting of new buildings, structures and industries and with the use, management and conversion of existing buildings.
- The living and leisure environment, and wherever possible the work environment, will meet society's requirements in terms of design, freedom from noise and access to sunlight, clean water and clean air.
- Areas of unspoiled nature and green spaces close to built-up areas, which will be easily accessible, will be protected in order to meet the need for play, recreation, local cultivation and a healthy local climate. Biodiversity will be preserved and enhanced.
- Transport services and facilities will be located and designed in such a way as to limit interference with the urban or cultural environment and so as not to pose health or safety risks or be otherwise detrimental to the environment.
- Environmentally sound, good-quality public transport systems will be available, and there will be ample facilities for safe pedestrian and cycle traffic.
- People will not be exposed to harmful air pollutants, noise disturbance, harmful radon levels or other unacceptable risks to health or safety.
- Land and water areas will be free from toxic and dangerous substances and other pollutants.
- The use of energy, water and other natural resources will be efficient, resource saving and environmentally sound, and will be reduced in the long term; the preferred energy sources will be renewable.
- The share of energy from renewable sources will have increased and this energy will, in the long term, account for most of the supply.
- Natural gravel will be used only where it is not possible to use substitutes in specific applications.
- Deposits of natural gravel that are of great value for the drinking water supply and the natural and cultural landscape will be conserved.
- The total quantity and hazardousness of waste will be decreasing.
- Wastes and residues will be separated so that they can be treated in accordance with their properties and recycled on a cooperative basis by urban areas and the surrounding rural areas.

(Naturvårdsverket 2012)

APPENDIX III The interrelationship between values and goals in Örebro-Bostäder's Vivalla five-step plan



APPENDIX IV Project group participants

(From start in February 2011 to June 2012)

REPRESENTING ÖBO

Peter Hjalmarsson, district manager in Vivalla

Anders Karlsson, local housing manager on Visgatan

Anna-Carin Bohman Magnusson, development strategist, head office

Helena Hasslert, refurbishing coordinator, district office (from February 2012)

Kicki Hendal, artist (until September 2011)

REPRESENTING THE TENANTS' ORGANIZATION (HTF)

Kenny Nilsson, elected representative in the HGF board, district level (April –December 2011)

Ali Quadiri, staff member at HGF [verksamhetsutvecklare] (from November 2011)

Andrea Nilsson, staff member at HGF district level (February - April 2011)

Eva Wickström (member of the HGF residential level board on Visgatan (from March 2011)

Sören Helander (member of the HGF residential level board on Visgatan (from March 2011)

OTHERS

Per Hector, Cesam (Centre for Community Development and Mobilization), Örebro

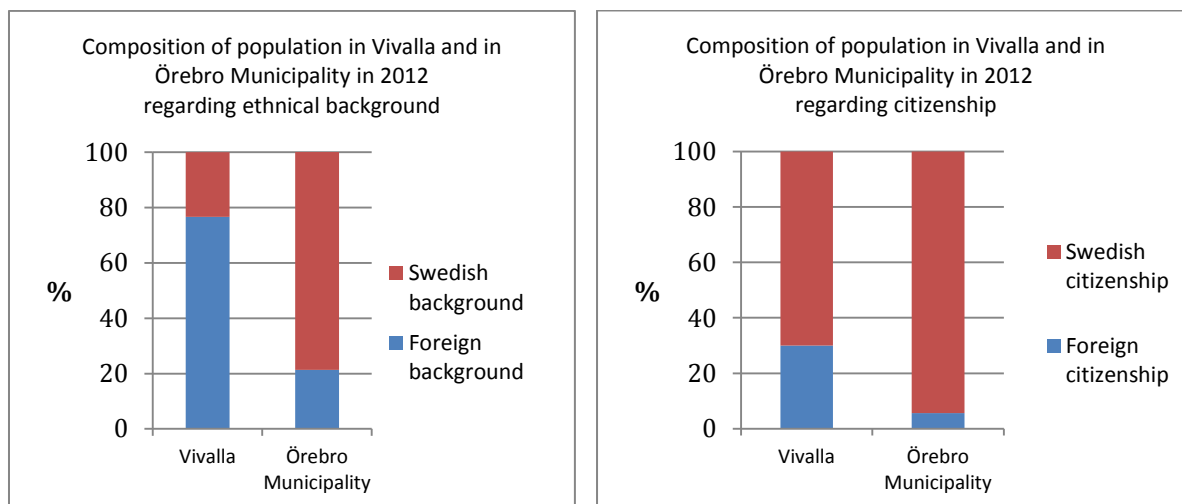
Christian Lundin, building consultant, ByggKom (Construction company), Örebro

Abdihakim Jama, tenant at Visgatan and chairman of the Somaliland organization in Örebro (from November 2011)

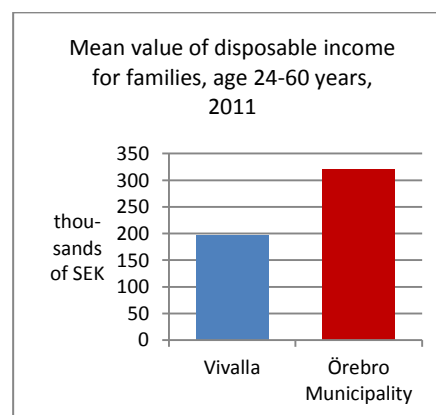
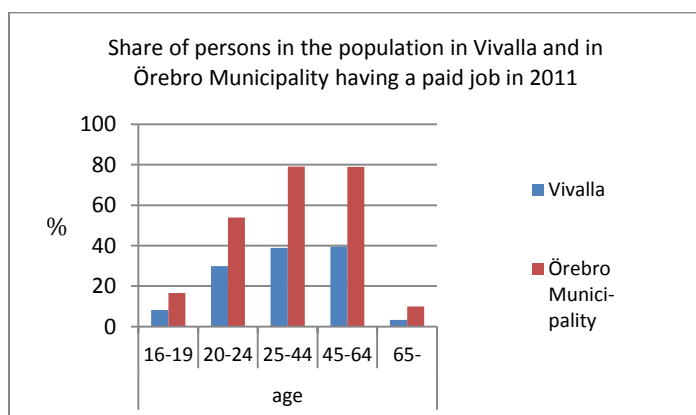
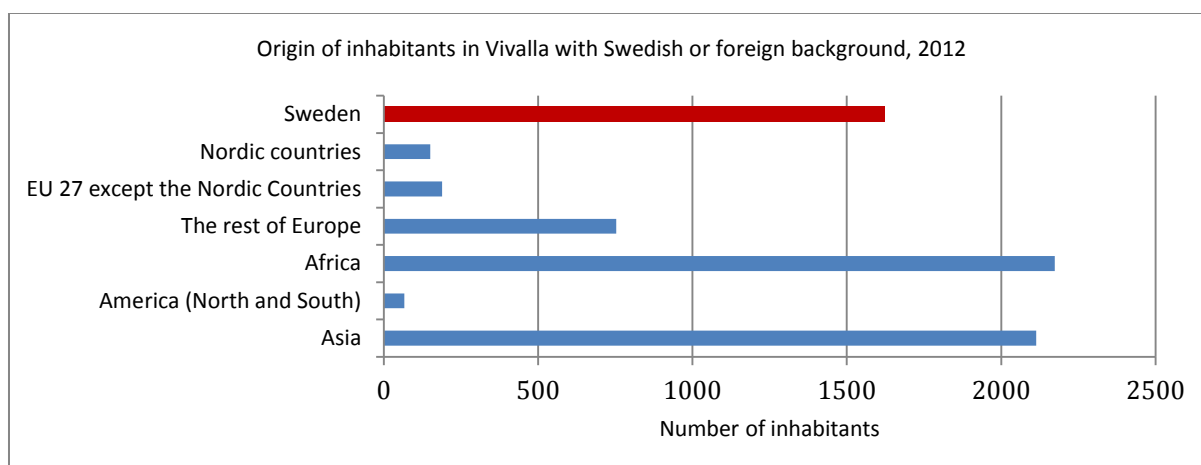
Claes Hagelvik, Arbetsförmedlingen (Boendebyggarna) (representing the employment agency) and the collaboration between ÖBO and the job centre in the project "Boendebyggarna" (from September 2011)

APPENDIX V Statistics Vivalla and Örebro Municipality

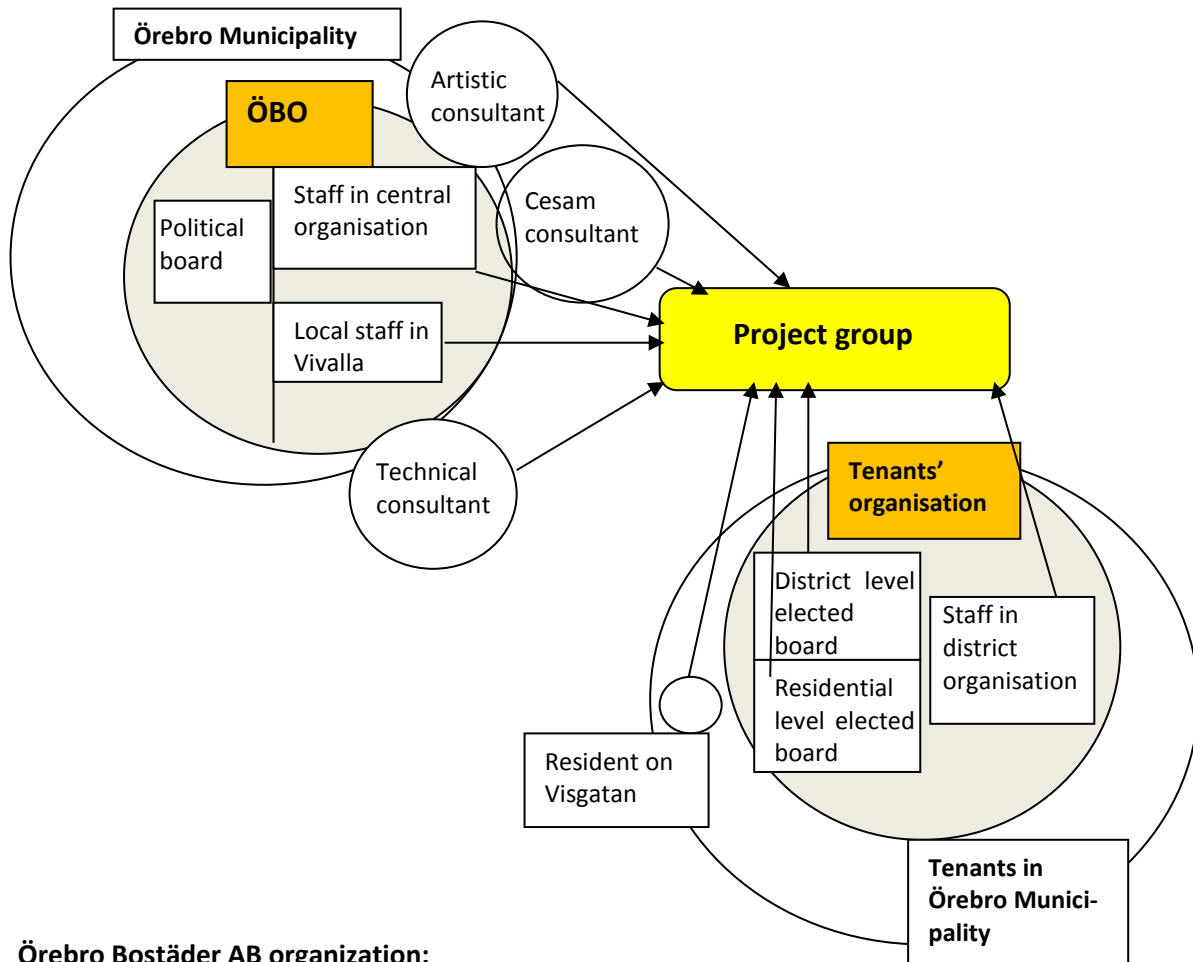
(all data from Örebro Municipality (2012))



Definition of foreign background: born abroad or born in Sweden with both parents born abroad.



APPENDIX VI My Green Neighbourhood: Organization chart



Örebro Bostäder AB organization:

Owned by Örebro Municipality and governed by a political board reflecting the political composition of the municipal council.

- ÖBO head office: managing director, and central staff
- 7 district offices, with a district manager and service staff
- About 60 local housing managers, distributed over the seven districts. The local housing manager functions as the main contact between the tenant and the district (or main) office.

Tenants' organization

Hyresgästföreningen (HGF) (The Swedish Union of Tenants) organization:

- National level organization (elected representatives and staff)
- Regional level organization (Region Mitt) (elected representatives and staff)
- District level organization (Örebro Municipality's geographical area) (elected representatives and staff)
- Residential level organization (Visgatan in Vivalla) (elected representatives)

APPENDIX VII My Green Neighbourhood: Time scale

