Credible and knowledgeable Enforcers

A study of the role of five Swedish public housing companies in vulnerable areas and their perception of the definition vulnerable areas

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Abstract

In many of Sweden's major cities the majority of apartments in the suburbs are managed and owned by municipality owned public housing companies. A number of these suburbs are defined by the national operations branch (NOA) of the Swedish Police as vulnerable or particularly vulnerable. These definitions are based on the level of influence of criminal behaviour within the areas. This study aims to investigate how local public housing companies construct their role in improving the status of socio-economically challenged areas and what significance publicly set labels such as *Vulnerable area* have on their work within certain areas.

Unstructured interviews with representatives from five public housing companies in five different Swedish municipalities were conducted. Neither of the interviewed companies puts particular significance into the "NOA labels", instead they use self-constructed labels. Other findings are that these companies are „credible enforcers" within their neighbourhoods of operation. The companies are able to practice a certain power based on legitimacy of reward (empowerment of and responsiveness towards the tenants) and punishment (of unwanted behaviour). The companies are also the most present public actor and, as such, are functioning as a hub for cooperation with other actors. Thirdly, the companies play a significant role in improving the neighbourhood's image for outsiders and residents alike.

Key words: suburbs, public housing companies, broken windows theory, vulnerable areas,

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1 Background

The national operative division (nationella operativa avdelningen, NOA) of the Swedish police authority (Polisen 2017) uses the three definitions: *vulnerable areas, risk areas and particularly vulnerable areas* on geographically delimited urban areas. The criteria are related to the degree of influence criminal activity in the area has on the everyday life of the inhabitants when it for example comes to willingness to report crime and cooperate with the police. Urban areas defined this way by NOA are also characterised by a low socio-economic status (Polisen 2017). Hallin and Westerdahl (2020) provide a broader view on vulnerability. They (ibid.) mean that urban areas are considered as (socially) vulnerable if a greater part of the population lives under vulnerable life conditions, compared to the national average. Although it is easier for criminal agents to gain foothold in these areas there is nothing synonymous between criminality and social vulnerability, exemplified by segregation and poverty.

The NOA definitions are used to enable the police authority to tailor its operations to areas with strong criminal connections. The use of these definitions in other context such as the daily common talk can be problematised due to its stigmatising effects. This criminality focused discourse allows for suggestions of heavier police enforcement, increased surveillance, stricter penalty as well as talk about Swedish no-go zones as seen in media and populistic political debates. Such measures have the possible effect to further alienate the inhabitants in these areas and increase resentment from and towards the suburban and mostly immigrant population (Dikeç 2016).

Regardless of definition used, The NOA's vulnerable or socially vulnerable as put by Hallin and Westerdahl (2020) are vulnerable areas often corresponding to what is commonly called million housing program areas (miljonprogramsområden). In fact, almost all urban areas considered vulnerable, as in challenged by segregation and low socio-economic status, are *miljonprogramsområden*; however, not all *miljonprogramsområden* are vulnerable (Esaiasson 2020). These areas were constructed within the ten-year period of 1965-75 in the Swedish effort to build one million new and modernised dwellings. They were built outside the city centres with the initial aim to accommodate working class household and closely resembling suburban areas can be found throughout Europe. Through a series of eco-political events such as neo-liberal transformations (Dikeç 2016) and a "deliberate dismantling of the

welfare state" (Sernhede et.al 2016:39), Swedish urban areas in general have become defined by a low socio-economic standard and with a heterogenic immigrant population.

Regarding the terminology Esaiasson (2020) argues that the word *suburb* is a more fair, less stigmatising and a more simple term to use when referring to such areas than for example *socially challenged urban areas*. This term will be used henceforth in this study.

As Sernhede et.al. (2016) write the suburbs were affected by a severe retreat of the welfare state in terms of public services. But one way the public has remained in these areas is the Swedish equivalent of public housing (*allmännyttan*), municipality owned or affiliated property managing companies that has as explicit goal to keep housing rents on an affordable level – for the public's benefit. In many areas, these companies are the main or only property owners. This gives the company a lot of power and acting space which corresponds to Esiasson's (2020) observation that the property owner is a strong legitimate actor when it comes to enforcing social norms and behaviour and improving the physical and social status of an area.

The aim of this study is to investigate how local public housing companies construct their role in improving the status of socio-economically challenged areas and what significance publicly set labels such as *Vulnerable area* have on their work within certain areas.

Improving will here be understood as actions towards raising the social status of the area, encompassing the socio-economic level, feeling of security, structural standard etc.

For this purpose, five public housing companies in five different municipalities have been studied through interviews: Bostäder i Borås - Borås, Förvaltning AB Framtiden - Gothenburg, Hyresbostäder - Norrköping, Vätterhem - Jönköping and Lunds Kommuns Fastighets AB (LKF) in Lund.

Research Questions:
- What weight are the housing companies putting on the "NOA labels" in the work for improving the areas?
- How do representatives describe the company's task in improving the area?
- What role do the public housing companies have in the task to improve the social conditions in and reputation of an area?

2 Literature review

Below the previous literature over the studied field will be presented. This chapter is introduced by a short summary of the definitions vulnerable areas, followed by a historical overview of the suburbs, also known as *Million Program areas* and the Swedish public housing entity *Allmännyttan*. After that comes a presentation over how these suburbs have come to be defined as vulnerable along with an example how urban policies can affect the sentiments among residents in these areas with examples taken from French suburbs in the early 2000's. Finally are points of observation from within a number of Swedish suburbs presented.

Search terms used (with Swedish counterparts in parenthesis) has been:
criminality (kriminalitet), million program areas (miljonprogramsområden) riots (upplopp), segregation (segregation), suburbs (förorter), vulnerable areas (utsatta områden), urban inequality (urban ojämlikhet).

2.1 Official definition of vulnerable areas as by the Swedish Police Authority

The National Operative Agency (NOA) of the Swedish Police Authority released the first list of urban areas defined as vulnerable, in 2015. The list itself and the definitions of the areas it included will henceforth be referred to as the NOA-list and the NOA-definitions. The official definitions of *vulnerable areas* and *particularly vulnerable areas* respectively are the following:

*Vulnerable area***:** is a geographically delimited area characterised by low socio-economic status where criminals have influence on the local community. This influence is bound to the social context of the area rather than an explicit will of the criminals to exercise control over the community. The influence takes a direct form through threats and blackmailing, or an indirect one such as public acts of violence that risk affecting third part, openly committed drug trade.

Particularly vulnerable area: fulfil the same criteria as a vulnerable area. Additionally, there is a general aversion to participate in the judicial process. Threats and acts of violence aimed

toward witnesses on a systematic level may occur. The situation in a particularly vulnerable area obstructs the police from fulfilling their mission which demands for a consistent adaptation of operation and equipment (NOA 2017). The effects of criminal influence are a increased insecurity experienced by the inhabitants, as well as a decreasing tendency to report crimes and to contribute to the judicial process (ibid.).

2.2 The Million Program areas and Allmännyttan

The word *Miljonprogramsområden*, henceforth *million program areas*, is used referring to urban areas that were established on an industrial scale during the program from which the name derives, the one million program. The Swedish population were growing due to the strong economy of the "record years" and the ensuing labour migration (Westerdahl 2020). In order to house the larger and urbanising population the Swedish government pursued the goal to build 1 million modern accommodations within the ten-year period 1965 – 1975. These housing units were to a large degree apartments built within close vicinity, outside the city centres of industrial cities (ibid.).

 Almost all urban areas that are or have been on the NOA list are million program areas (Westerdahl 2020; Esaiasson 2020). This development is historically grounded. Shortly after the areas were completed the Swedish economy deeply suffered from an industrial crisis (Westerdahl 2020). Less industry meant less labourers, both native and migrated, who were meant to use the newly built housing. Many of these areas therefore stood empty for a period of time. With the 90's immigration wave, immigrants came to be the majority of inhabitants in many of the million program areas, which drastically changed the areas' average socio-economic status (ibid.).

The general term for the Swedish public housing is *allmännyttan* – literally: beneficial for the public. Originally these publicly owned (on municipal level) housing companies were non-profit. However, the property owner's federation complained 2011 stating that the subsidies paid to the public landlords were a breach of the EU competition law (Lind 2014). Since then, it was stated that the public housing companies shall work on business-like profit-making grounds while still honouring the social mission.

In Sweden there is no such thing as social housing, if social housing would be defined as a specific part of the housing stock founded with subsidies, reserved especially for low-income

households (Lind 2014). However, with the increased immigration in 1990 the public housing companies came to house socio-economically weak households to a higher degree than first intended. They became "social by default" (Westerdahl 2020:60).

2.3 Why vulnerable areas

Per-Olof Hallin and Stig Westerdahl (2020) point out that the term *vulnerable area* has been used differently in the social debate. They mean that in general the labels have come from outsiders such as social scientists, politicians, and journalists but seldom the inhabitants themselves. The debate and discourse over such areas and the usage of terms like *vulnerable* has thus led to stigmatising effects (ibid.)

The suburbs can still be described as vulnerable, without necessarily using the NOA-definitions. According to Hallin and Westerdahl (2020) the focus lies on the social vulnerability of the population in these areas instead of criminality per se. The authors (2020) present three factors of social vulnerability: When compared to the national average, the inhabitants of suburbs characteristically enjoy fewer life opportunities, lower life conditions and weakened capabilities to change their situation. The suburbs are also burdened by structural segregation (ibid.).

Life opportunities means the opportunity to live the *good life* i.e., access to education, a well-paid job and a home of good standard. In direct relationship with an individual's opportunities to attain the good life are what Hallin and Westerdahl (2020) call life conditions. Living under precarious life conditions has a direct negative effect on the life opportunities of an individual, the opposite relationship is also true, having one's life conditions accommodated for makes good opportunities to live a good life.

Capabilities are introduced here as the ability of an individual, collective or institution to manage and change upcoming situations (Hallin & Westerdahl 2020). Individual or self-capability intend how difficult situations can be handled and turned around by one person. The concept of self-capability can also be compared with the concept of self-efficacy as coined by Bandura (1982). The author suggests that major factors of said efficacy, such as self-esteem are developed in the early years of childhood.

Collective capability is the capability of a group to together solve common issues or tasks, and to exercise social control over their vicinity. It is relatable to the concept social capital (see the theory section below) in the way it has to do with protecting shared interest

and exercise social norms (ibid.). Likewise, the factors for *Institutional capability* are the resources and capacities that local community institutions have at their disposal to fulfil their mission. These three forms of capability are in symbiose with each other, the individual develops their own capability in synchronisation with the collective and institutional capabilities and will be expressed differently depending on local context (Hallin & Westerdahl 2020).

Hallin (2020) suggests five points of focus that are important in order to create good living conditions and turn the social development of suburbs around. Two of these points are the conditions of children's upbringing and relations and recognition, the other three will be presented in depth below.

A basic sense of safety and security:
The residents in an area need to have a basic sense of security (Hallin 2020). In order to achieve this, the most elemental of the psychological criterions for security must first be satisfied, a sense of security at home (ibid.). Hallin (2020) therefore states that functioning forms of support for families and individuals are crucial. Residents also need to feel safe in their immediate living environment. Here the civil society plays an influential role in regaining control over the public space, where the collective capability is a prerequisite. Local landlords can play an important role through a wider social engagement (ibid.).

Employment and housing:
Another point made by Hallin (2020) is to bolster individuals' possibilities and opportunities to employment and through that contribute themselves to the improvement of their living conditions. If employment and households' increased income lead to an increased tendency to move away to better areas this in turn will lead to a negative outcome for the neighbourhood, in particular if new low-income families move in, taking the former ones' place. Certain measurements should be taken to decrease the incentive to leave the neighbourhood on order to increase living standard (Hallin 2020). One such solution of this is to ensure a mixture of tenure forms, both rentals and condominiums within the same neighbourhood (ibid.).

Representation:

The inhabitants of the suburbs must be able to represent themselves i.e. to have the possibility to participate in the public discussion and on the established democratic arena. Voting participation is lower in the suburbs, which is related to low level of education, income and foothold on the labour market (Hallin 2020). Individuals and large demographical groups are without influence and the political discussion and the public life in general is thus becoming more segregated (ibid.).

2.4 The pathological perspective and geographical grievance in the suburbs

In the context of contemporary urban disturbances, rage and riots, Dikeç (2016:99ff) account for how urban policies have undergone five generalised transformations since the 1970's:

1. An Economical restructuring and rising inequality,
2. Changes of priorities in urban policies
3. Increased stigmatisation of minority groups
4. Steady erosion of civil liberties, increasing surveillance, and the normalisation of authoritarian forms of state response to dissent.
5. A crisis of legitimacy. Namely the decreasing confidence in the political elite and the liberal-democratic system of representation.

Points 3-5 have according to Dikeç (2016), had a particular impact on sentiments among residents in urban neighbourhoods towards the authorities, especially in the 90's onwards. Dikeç (2016:97) argues that urban uprisings always carry a call for equality and justice although it is not always explicitly articulated. These cathartic events should be seen as the result of societal dynamics such as an increasingly forceful police interventions and oppression and as protests and acts of defiance against such dynamics, and the established order of things (ibid:98).

Dikeç's (2016) article is a case work of the development of the French urban policies from the last decades of the 20th century and onwards. The dictionary definition of the French word *banlieue* (suburb), refers to a locality that lies outside an urban centre but is within its administrative area of influence (Larousse 2022). A direct comparison with the Swedish *förort* is done later on.

The contemporary usage refers, however, to urban areas with a certain type of housing and demography. The population of these areas often have immigrant background and lower

degree of employment and are associated with disparity and disadvantage (Dikeç 2016:102). Compare with the Swedish counterparts *förort, utsatta områden or miljon-programsområden* which is used synonymously. This contemporary usage, and the resulting aversiveness and fear of the banlieues among the general population, are fed by a dystopian narrative of urban unrest, drawing example from American ghettos and UK's "race riots". (Dikeç 2016:102).

The negative perception of the suburbs is in large driven by a *pathological perspective* (Dikeç 2016:97). According to the pathological framework, violent riots and other acts of defiance are inherent in the flawed behaviours of the individual(s) (Dikeç 2016:97). Pathology is the study of disease and injury. The perspective thus indicates that there is a sickness in the culture, personality, or morality of the revolting suburb inhabitants, rather than the riots are caused by grievances fed by long-term structural social problems.

Politicians are, according to Dikeç (2016:98), not so keen to recognise the socio-political root of the problem, as it would mean taking responsibility for it. A triangular relationship is distinguishable between the injustice-fed grievances, a pathological logic, and a hardened discourse that shifts the policies from prevention to repression.
Jacques Chirac, after running the French presidential election of 2002 with promises of "zero tolerance" and "zero impunity", led a right-wing government that notably passed a series of repressive statutes, focusing on *banlieue* youth (Dikeç 2016:108). The at-the-time interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy issued the community police, patrolling the suburbs he himself referred to as *sensitive neighbourhoods* and *outlaw areas,* with rubber ball guns. This measure adheres to Kelling's and Wilson's (1982) notion that the task of the police increasingly has gone from order-keeping to crime fighting, from prevention to repression.

      The pathological perspective is found in how Sarkozy came to choose provocative and pejorative expressions such as refereeing to the suburb inhabitants as "racailles" (scum). In 2005, while visiting the neighbourhood of La Courneuve, North of central Paris, he even mentioned how he would use a power-washing tool from the brand Kärcher to clean the neighbourhood (Dikeç 2016, Libération 2005).

Later that year, in the commune Clichy-sous-Bois, not too far away from the east of La Courneuve, a revolt was triggered by an incident during which two of three young men were killed and the third severely injured. Trying to escape a police identity check the three men had hidden themselves in an electricity substation where they got electrocuted on the

equipment (Dikeç 2016:110). The police officers officially denied having chased them, against the testimony of the one surviving man. The following local, two-day-long revolt had just started to simmer down when a riot-police tear-gas grenade landed in a mosque in Paris, which was perceived as a deliberate provocation from the police's side (Dikeç 2016:110). The ensuing riots took place in around 300 French cities for a two-week period (ibid.).

The triangle goes full circle here; after the end of the riots Sarkozy regretted his referral of the rioters as thugs and scums, but only because these words were too gentle taking into account the so-called juridical ancestry of certain individuals arrested during the riots (Libération 2005) According to Dikeç (2016:114) Sarkozy's use of language was not new but he did indeed raise the bar, "adding to the stigmatisation of the banlieue youth".

In conclusion, Dikeç (2016) showed in his article how using deprecative language, proposing for stricter and more forceful police policies fuels the sentiments of an oppressing police amongst the inhabitants, which in turn make things worse in the long run. In comparison, directly after the Stockholm uprisings, in Sweden in 2013 the at-the-time Prime Minister Reinfeldt and Minister of the interior Ullenhag had expressed themselves in a similar manner, requesting harsher measures and putting the main responsibility of the riots on the local inhabitants (Sernhede et al. 2016).

2.5 Points of observation from the suburbs

Peter Esaiasson (2020) conducted an expansive survey enquiry in two "vulnerable" suburbs of Gothenburg which later resulted in the book *Förorten – a social scientific reportage*. Although the work has the ambition of being of popular scientific character, available for the bigger audience, rather than being a strictly scientific report it does provide plenty of important insights to the reader.

The purpose of the study was to investigate how the residents of these two Gothenburg suburbs thought about living in their home area and about Swedish society in general. The study led Esaiasson (2020) to identify 19 points of observation. The points deemed most useful for this study will be presented here.

Residents Express sorrow about the stigmatisation of the area

In Esaiasson's (2020) survey, residents expressed that they would be surprised if they heard praise of their neighbourhood. The underlying meaning of that sentiment is that the respondents never or seldom heard anything positive about their area of residency or similar suburbs. As Esaiasson (2020) puts it, the inferior status of the suburbs is implied within the every-day discourse, in conversations between inhabitants as well as outsiders. He argues that a recurring theme in the responses was that there was a sorrow over how stigmatised the home area had become. Some resident responded that they find the area to be agreeable to live in after all and they wished that others could see it as well.

The reoccurring problem of littering

Trash is overall a reported problem in the suburbs (Esaiasson 2020). Trash lying around is problematic on several levels. Firstly, birds and vermin feed on it which may increase the spread of diseases. Secondly, trash accumulating around public spaces or recycling areas is degrading the image of the area and the pride for the community is undermined (Esaiasson 2020). In addition, public resources in terms of time and money are bleeding out on sanitation measures (ibid.).

Esaiasson (2020) argues the responsibility of keeping the community nice and tidy mainly lies on the residents themselves. The inability of arguably only a minority of the population to comply with the social norm of the majority to put the household's trash in the right place is reported to create irritations and friction among residents. Indirectly this also causes friction between residents and local personnel (ibid.). Esaiasson (2020) means that the apparent lack of concern for the cleanliness of the area is a sign of inadequacy of coordination and unity between the different demographic groups in the area. The trash issue is therefore a major everyday irritation of the inhabitants and finding a solution to the littering problem is a major key to the improvement of the image of the area (ibid.).

The friction between working and non-working residents

Even though Swedish *suburbs* struggle with a high rate of unemployment, some parts of the population still have a daily occupation to support themselves with. Esaiasson (2020) indicates that the working suburbanites are critical towards those co-residents who are not. In other words, the former see themselves as contributors to the society, and oppose themselves to the latter, which they accuse for "making a mess" in the neighbourhood

A resentment is built up amid the general population towards the unemployed. As this group in many suburbs is overrepresented by immigrants, a critique is voiced about how immigrants seemingly are allowed to live on social benefits while doing nothing (Esaiasson 2020). According to some respondents in Esaiasson's (2020) survey, the current state of the neighbourhood (high unemployment, high rates of criminality and insecurity) is the fault of the government and the greater society. A common sentiment seemed to be that "it is not our fault we live in a ghetto" (Esaiasson 2020:101). Demands are voiced for politicians and the greater society to *do something* and to pay more attention to the suburbs as inhabitants feel abandoned and forgotten compared to "proper" *Swedish* areas (Esaiasson 2020).

In conclusion there is a motivation from within the areas to improve the image and status of the suburbs. There is little to no ground for stereotypical notions such as that the residents in these areas have chosen their situation themselves.

The public housing companies are a strong uniting force and creator of order within the suburbs.

To create a sense of order and security out of chaos in any community, there must be a strong and *credible enforcer*. This enforcer would be the one that takes responsibility**,** the one who is reliable with their word and is perceived as strong enough to have legitimacy to put power behind these words, to both reward and punish. (Esaiasson 2020). The government relying on the idea of the power of the state is the credible enforcer in most stable and peaceful nations (Esaiasson 2020). Within the order that is created and upheld by the credible enforcer, notions such as trust and cohesive solidarity can develop and manifest. A community with a strong sense of trust and solidarity is self-regulating against disorder and disturbances (Kelling & Wilson 1982; ibid.).

Esaiasson (2020) observed that in the Swedish suburbs the public housing companies are the strongest uniting power. The state, represented through various institutions, can hardly be as present and practice the same direct relation to the residents as the housing companies can (ibid.). According to Esaiasson (2020) has the public housing company Gårdsten Bostäder in Gothenburg proven itself to be a credible enforcer. The company has taken the leader role in different co-operative projects with other public organisations. It ensured the control over public spaces by making it encumbering for bothersome elements to use these spaces. It has also exercised control by being selective with whom is allowed to rent in the area, the main

criterion being self-sufficiency, and by being stricter with evictions of residents that do not comply with the regulations (Esaiasson 2020).

2.6 Summary

The NOA-definitions tells us on what grounds the studied urban areas are considered being vulnerable areas. Although this has a strong relevance to this study, the definitions and the perspective of the police do not tell us why the areas have come to reach this state, instead it provides an understanding for the term *vulnerable areas* used henceforth in this study. Hallin (2020) and Hallin and Westerdahl (2020) however, provide a more multifaceted perspective on both the labelling terms and the issue.

As Hallin and Westerdahl (2020) state the labels are almost exclusively used by outsiders such as social scientist, politicians and journalists their testimony can be used in this study to investigate whether the public housing actors are using vocabulary putting themselves in the category of outsiders or if they have more of an insider perspective of the issues within the suburbs. Additionally, Hallin and Westerdahl (2020) state that the term *vulnerable areas* has been used differently in the general talk about Swedish suburbs, and as such can be used without having the NOA-definitions in mind. The authors (2020) rather refer to social vulnerability based in the de-facto low socio-economic status in the areas.

Hallin (2020) provides a historical context of the so called million program areas. Most of the suburbs that are labelled as vulnerable areas today are million program areas. This suggests that there is something inherent in the structure or the function of these settlements. Given that the million program areas since the 90's have had an immigrant population majority, a population that through social structures have a lower socioeconomic status compared with other Swedes initiatives targeted towards increasing the socio-economic status of these demographic groups within the areas are important. In order to come to terms with the challenges the inhabitants in these areas face, Hallin and Westerdahl (2020) suggest different actions to strengthen the inhabitant's *social capital* and ultimately improving their quality of life. It is of interest in this study to explore if what the studied public housing actors are doing is in line with these suggestions.

Dikeç (2016) describes a process behind urban unrest and riots in suburbs. Although his examples are from French suburbs in the first decade of the 21st century are there nothing that suggest that this pattern is not comparable with any urban area in western Europe. Dikeç's position is that stigmatising word usage of certain areas and its inhabitants has a self-fulfilling prophecy as it again leads to stigmatising policies such as more authoritarian use of the police towards the inhabitants of the suburbs which leads to further grievances from within these areas.

The ester riots of 2022, fuelled by demonstrations of a Scandinavian right wing populist took place only a couple of weeks to a moth prior to that the interviews with the responding public housing companies were conducted. It is therefore of interest from the perspective of Dikeç's (2016) article to investigate how the housing companies have responded both towards the unrest that might have risen in their own areas and to the public and political response to these riots.

Finally, in his book, Esaiasson (2020) gathered gras-root perspective from the inhabitants of two vulnerable areas on how life within the areas and the public housing companies are perceived. The author concludes that the housing companies are *credible enforcers* within their areas of operation meaning that they can both exert power as keepers-of-order and receive trust and legitimacy from their tenants. Esaiasson (2020) further observes that the upkeep and general tidiness of the areas are important for the inhabitants.
It will within this study be interesting to try Esaiasson perspective with other public housing companies, none of which were objects in the surveys of Esaiasson. Furthermore, the notions of both credible enforcers and the importance of tidiness are both close akin to the *broken windows theory*.

The above mentioned authors have directly mentioned or otherwise invited to reflection about a couple of theoretical themes, namely: *social capital, territorial stigmatisation* and *the broken window theory*. These theories will be investigated further below.

3 Theory

In the following the different theories concerning social capital, the broken windows theory and territorial stigmatisation are presented. These theories help explain the background of vulnerable areas and how their social image can be improved.

3.1 Social capital

Social Capital will throughout this work be defined and understood as the figurative capital consisting of personal relations, networks, and social trust and norms within groups of people. Social capital distinguish itself from other types of capital, i.e., economic and human capital, as it is materialised in the structures of relations and interactions between individuals, rather than materialistic value or individual characteristics (Coleman 1988, Portes 1998). Similar to other types of capital can the resources of social capital e.g., support, trust and cohesive strength received from various networks be spent to achieve certain ends that would not have been possible without them (Coleman 1988). The aggregated resources attained from the membership of these networks enable groups and collectives to work together more effectively when pursuing and protecting shared interests (Bourdieu 1986; Putnam 1995; Halpern 2005). Social capital is applicable on all types of groups such as working teams within the workplace, social communities, neighbourhoods and family relations.

In one of his examples of social capital, Coleman (1988) observes a high degree of trust among individuals in the Jewish wholesale diamond trading community of New York. Between them valuable gemstones are freely exchanged for examination without any form of formal insurance agreement (ibid.). Coleman argues that factors for this social cohesion and trust lie in the professional, ethnic, cultural, family, community, and religious dimensions (Coleman 1988). As these dimensions are closely intertwined among the Jewish diamond traders the breaking of social norms and trust is at high stake. The social cohesion of social capital is thus a key to trust among individuals.

Coleman's (1988) example can be seen as incorporating a macro level of social interaction into the concept of social capital. The assumption is that social and cultural norms also facilitate co-operative action (Halpern 2005). The use of the macro level has been fruitful in research on differences on national and regional level concerning trust between strangers (ibid.). According to Halpern (2005) the informal form of interaction, based on cultural and social habits also makes room under the concept *social capital* for a more formal and institutionalised dimension of interaction. This formal dimension would consist of political, legal and institutional structures e.g., the trust toward local health and social institutions. In other words, social capital can be understood as not just only the trust among citisens but also their trust towards the institutions of society. "Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions [that] underpin society, it is the glue that hold them together. (World Bank 1999 cited in Halpern 2005:16).

This study will include social capital as a concept with the understanding that both the macro-level and institutional relations are included.

3.1.1 Bonding and bridging

Social capital is distinguished into two subtypes, *bonding* and *bridging* social capital. *Bonding social capital* is inwards looking, it is based on and reinforces mutual identities, attitudes and characteristics such as family ties, ethnic origin, religious affiliation (Claridge 2018a). The relational ties within a bonded group are strong and provides a strong source for social support for those in need (ibid.). However, the characterising strong support within the group of bonding social capital is also a major base for possible negative outcomes (ibid.). Tightly structured and exclusive groups are prone to create outgroups and exclusion. In extreme circumstances, this can lead to ideas of racist, sexist, elitist nature, etc. (ibid.).

    Bridging social capital is outwards looking, it overlaps social divides such as race, class and geographical belonging. The social ties are generally weaker than the bonding ones but provide the benefit of the exchange of new perspectives and ideas with other groups, communities and organisations (Claridge 2018b). This exchange has the positive effect of an increased ability to gather information and recognise new opportunities. The bridge over social boundaries may also have an effect of increased tolerance and acceptance to different values and beliefs (ibid.). In short, the difference between the two types of social capital can be described as "sociological superglue versus sociological WD-40" (Putnam 2000:23)

3.2 The Broken Windows Theory

The *Broken Windows Theory* as defined by Kelling and Wilson (1982) reads, in a nutshell, that if a building is unattended for, and a broken window is left unrepaired, more damage will follow. As Kelling and Wilson (1982:31) put it: "one unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing". In other words, the theory sees the establishment of crime or social degradation in general as a developmental sequence starting from the negligence of lesser crime or minor disturbances of the public order.

The theory has in the criminological literature been considered the ground for proposals for hardened police enforcement under the paroles of zero-tolerance, for example in Giuliani's New York during the 1990's. And as such it has received critique (Harcourt 1998).

An example Kelling and Wilson (1982) built their article on is the 1969 experiment by Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo in which one car was left unlocked and unattended in the Bronx, New York and a similar car in Palo Alto, California. The reason for that the car in the "worse" neighbourhood The Bronx being violated almost immediately whereas the one in the Californian neighbourhood was left untouched for over a week, lies in the anonymous nature of the community and the past experiences of that no one cares. Kelling's and Wilson's reasoning in their 1982 article goes further into the sociological perspective of the theory, thus a deeper resumé is well deserved. The authors (ibid.) point of departure is that average citizens have a greater fear of experiencing disturbing elements in the public environment than of being victims for major acts of crime. This means that disturbing elements, such as: littering, loitering, vandalism and graffiti and the presence of publicly drunkards, beggars and vagabonds as well as prostitutes is a better measurement for how the residents perceive the order and safety in their home neighbourhood than the number of robberies and gang shootings (Kelling & Wilson 1982).

This conclusion is grounded in the case of an urban area in New Jersey and a patrolling police officer. The residents of the area in which the patrolling police officer had become a

casual element expressed an increased sense of security. They tended to believe that crime had been reduced and had a more favourable opinion of the police than those living in areas patrolled by car (ibid.). In addition, the foot-patrolling officers showed greater job satisfaction, higher morale and more favourable attitudes towards inhabitants in their assigned neighbourhoods (ibid.).

The initiative to increase the hours of police foot-patrolling came from New Jersey state officials with the hope it would reduce the crime rates (Kelling & Wilson 1982). Even though the foot-patrolling police officers did not have the anticipated negative effect on criminality it did have other beneficial effects contra car-patrolling. Kelling and Wilson (1982) mean that the sense of increased security among the citizens derives from that the more present police officers have a greater control over the public order in the neighbourhoods. Without the barrier to the outside world a car door would make, the police officer can make better contact with individuals, and a have an easier time meeting teenagers in their banter and so creating a foundation for alliances (Kelling & Wilson 1982). According to Kelling and Wilson (1982), the increased approachability of the officers enables the citizens to talk to the police more easily, which gives them a significant sense of have done something about a perceived problem. The authors refer to their own experience of that most citizens like to talk to the police and by doing so, voicing complaints or pointing out what worries them, gives them a "modest but significant sense of having done something about the problem" (Kelling & Wilson 1982:34).

The police officers also become more able to separate regulars from newcomers. Kelling and Wilson (19882) report that the local policeman makes the conscious distinction between regulars and newcomers or foreigners. Every newcomer is a potential threat to the public order but for instance the well-known local alcoholic is tolerated as long as they behave. The role of the police is here to make sure that the order of the neighbourhood remains. A role that in an ideal situation is shared with the local community.

The more stable the neighbourhood is, with families who care for their homes and community, mind each other's children, and confidently frown upon unwanted intruders, the fewer are opportunities for the criminals and anti-social elements. Kelling and Wilson (1982) draw the link to the process of how the broken window multiplies according to the theory. In this case an unchecked violator of the community's social norms is the first broken window.

Vandalism and other types of lesser crimes can arise everywhere as soon as the social barriers - the sense of mutual responsibility and the obligations of civility - are lowered and a no-one-cares mentality is nurtured (ibid.).

A formerly considered nice neighbourhood can within a few years or even months degrade to a state in which criminals and un-social behaviour seemingly can roam free (Kelling & Wilson 1982). It can snowball swiftly from that the first families move out and unattached adults move in. The social decline of the neighbourhood matters less for these new unattached adults as they to a less prone to consider the neighbourhood as their home, but rather just somewhere they live. They are young cosmopolitans and have the ability or ambition soon enough to move elsewhere (Kelling & Wilson 1982).

It will naturally matter more for those that do not have the means or possibilities to move away, the elderly for example. These will start to avoid the streets as much as possible and when they do, they will try and avoid passing by the teenage gangs that have become much rowdier. For those with memories of the good old days, the neighbourhood will cease to exist as anything more but a geographical place if the sociological windows of the community is allowed to be kept broken (ibid.).

The citizen who fears the ill-smelling drunk, the rowdy teenager, or the importuning beggar is not merely expressing his distaste for unseemly behaviour; he is also giving voice to a bit of folk wisdom that happens to be a correct generalisation—namely, that serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behaviour goes unchecked. (Kelling & Wilson 1982:34).

3.3 Advanced marginality: Territorial stigmatisation

Wacquant (2007) uses the term advanced marginality to describe the new kind of marginality that has developed during the two first decades of the 21st century. This marginality advances past the traditional characteristics of marginality such as class, income and poverty and race or ethnicity. Advanced marginality is "*fed by the ongoing fragmentation of the wage-labour relationship, the functional disconnection of dispossessed neighbourhoods from the national*

and global economies, and the reconfiguration of the welfare state into an instrument for enforcing the obligation of paid work in the polarizing city." (Wacquant 2007:67).

In his article Wacquant specifies three distinctive spatial properties of advanced marginality: territorial fixation and stigmatisation; spatial alienation and the dissolution of *place* and thirdly, the loss of a hinterland. Of these three are the first two more relevant to the study and will more into depth be presented below .

3.3.1 Territorial fixation and stigmatisation

Territorial Stigmatisation is when a specific geographical territory is laid under a certain stigma. Traditional sources of such stigma are a concentration of poverty and or immigrants. Regardless of underlying reasons these areas are increasingly starting to be perceived as, like Wacquant (2007:67) puts it, "social purgatories, leprous Badlands […] where only the refuse of society would accept to dwell". This is a perception owned by both insiders and outsiders, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and its visitors and discourses of vilification tend to gather around such areas (ibid.). In other words, it becomes "known" that these parts of the city are dangerous to visit as they are full of violence, criminals, drug addicts, and culturally strange people. These discourses will be found in both the daily ordinary interactions *from below* as well as in the political, bureaucratic, journalistic, and scientific spheres *from above*.

Wacquant (2007:67) argues that every first world country has one or several cities, districts or neighbourhoods that are publicly known and recognised as "urban hellholes". Some even reach the status of national eponym for a failed welfare state, police force, immigration etc. Pure logic argues for that this should be true on regional and municipal/city levels as well, there will always be that one area that gets the majority of bad headlines and reputation. Due to the negative reputation of the area, living there creates a "muted sentiment of guilt and shame whose unacknowledged weight warps human contact (Pétonnet 1982:148).

Another more discerning effect of stigmatisation can be found on public policy level. From the moment a place has been marked as "undesired" for the society, authorities are free to justify measures "deviating from both law and custom" (Wacquant 2007:69). This in turn has the possible effect, deliberate or not, to further marginalise an already marginalised population.

3.3.2 Spatial alienation and the dissolution of place

Spatial alienation and the dissolution of *place* refers to a subsequent process in the front line of territorial stigmatisation. This process eradicates the recognition of the urban area as a "humanized, culturally familiar and socially filtered locale" (Wacquant 2007:69) in which the inhabiting population can feel at home and safe. A *place* is a *somewhere* in which the community inhabitants share emotions understanding and meaning, expressions supported by mutual practices and institution (Wacquant 2007). A local marketplace or active neighbourhood centre poses a good example of this. A distinction is made between *place* and *space*. Contrary to *places* are *spaces* rather indifferent spatial environments, described as potential voids and potential threats, areas to be feared, secured, or fled (Smith 1987). A run-down community centre with much less activity and motion exemplifies a *space* within the community.

The processes of dissolution of place can thus partially be understood as a political process, or lack of political attention towards the community. This political shift, from place to space is further accelerated by the dwindling of social bonds among the community in suburban areas (Smith 1987). With the weakening of such locally anchored social bonds between the inhabitants comes the tendency of them to seek shelter in the individual and private household. Isolating from neighbouring citizens further increases the feeling of vulnerability and disconnection (Smith 1987)

3.4 Summary

The theory of social capital has been chosen due to its compatibility with the research question regarding the role the public housing companies have in the task to improve the social conditions in and reputation of an area. As social capital is understood as the resources individuals and groups have to pursue and protect interests, the theory will be useful to investigate what effect the initiatives of the housing companies will have on their tenants general social status. Both the *bonding* and *bridging* types of social capital would be of interest to look into. Bonding social capital can tie the various ethnical groups within the suburbs together and in this way create the sense of community and the bridging counterpart can bridge

communication between the suburbs and the rest of the society as a measure to increase integration.

Macro level social capital has been used in previous research regarding trust between strangers, social capital in the formal sense can also be used in investigating the trust the tenants have towards the public housing companies as well as other public institutions. A disadvantage of using the theory in the latter regard in this study is that the perspective of the tenants are not sought after.

Kelling and Wilson (1982) tell us two things in their article over the broken windows theory, the first is that a neighbourhood left unkept will continue to deteriorate. Secondly, exemplified with patrolling policeman in the authors article, showing presence creates order and is in itself a buffer towards undesirable elements.

Both of these factors are relevant to the research question regarding how the companies' representatives describe the company's task in improving the area. The public housing companies are responsible for physically keeping the neighbourhood in good state as well as ensuring the tenants sense of security.

Disadvantages with using this theory in the context of the study may be that the theory itself is leaning towards the criminological field and crime prevention, tasks that the housing companies cannot undertake.

Wacquant's (2007) standpoint is that what is publicly said about a neighbourhood ends up affecting what both outsiders and the inhabitants think of the neighbourhood and of themselves. This framework is thus relevant to the research question: What weight are the housing companies putting on the "NOA labels" in the work for improving the areas? The theoretical framework can be helpful in investigating what the implications of this label would be on the housing companies daily work.

The second part of Wacquant's article, the one regarding dissolution of *place* also gains relevance to this study's aim in the way that how a neighbourhood is physically constructed, whether it has enough places with value for the community. In this regard the article is compatible with the other theoretical frameworks: social capital and the broken windows theory and corresponding research questions.

4 Method

4.1 Ontology and Epistemology

The aim of this study is to investigate how public housing companies construct their role in improving the status and standard of socio-economically challenged areas and what significance publicly set labels such as *Vulnerable area* have on their work within these areas.

Out of this aim a certain ontological perspective can be derived. Ontology means the understanding of the nature of social entities (Bryman 2016:693). Having an ontological perspective thus involves what the researchers see as the nature, character and essence of the social world they seek to study (Mason 2018:4). The above-mentioned aim shows that the ontological perspective of the study is how the representatives of the concerned housing companies perceive the policies used and actions made by the company. The focus of the study also includes the social processes that these actions have resulted in or been influenced by. Hence the ontological perspective of this study is constructivism (Bryman 2016:693).

An acknowledged ontology helps to guide the researcher towards which questions can be asked to study these points of interest and what kind of responses can be accepted as answers to these questions (Bryman 2016:690; Mason 2018:7). The latter is referred to as the epistemology of the study. Epistemology stands for the theory of knowledge, which is seen as evidence and knowledge in the studied topic (Mason 2018:7). How phenomena within the social world can be known and how this knowledge can be validated and demonstrated is determined by the principles and rules the researcher in advance has decided to follow (ibid.). The epistemology used should be consistent with the chosen ontological perspective (ibid.). This study takes the *interpretivist* epistemological stance (Mason 2018:8,226; Bryman 2016:26-27) as it aims to emphasise to interpret the meaning people make of their surroundings.

4.2 Methodology

The ontological and epistemological perspectives form the choice of the study's methodology. In this qualitative study Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) will be used. In ECA the data set is continually revisited to allow for refinements of categories and generation of new ones as the study moves forward (Bryman 2016:564). ECA is hence a contrast to

regular content analysis which is characterised by themes primarily being set (Bryman 2016:285,563). The originators of the approach; Altheide and Schneider (2013) describe the approach's aim to be systematic and analytic but still leaving room for a certain flexibility from the researcher.

4.3 Method

In this study semi-structured interviews have been used. The main factor for the choice of this type of interview is that certain different themes needed to be covered (Bryman 2016:468). Likewise, was the choice to use open ended questions dependent on giving the respondent the opportunity to freely answer the question however they wish in an informal conversion style interview (Bryman 2016:244; Mason 2018:110).

The open-ended questions that were asked can be reviewed in the interview guide (appendix A) and have been used as a gateway into each of these themes. This approach is deliberately chosen because prepared questions in qualitative semi-structured interviews shall be seen as an interview guide rather than a manuscript used more in structured and survey-based research (Bryman 2016:467). The change or revisits of themes or thematic questions has been flowing and inspired by the input of the interviewees. It has also influenced the coding procedure that will be described more in detail below. The four themes have been: The NOA definition, Integration of tenants, Areas of focus, social capital.

The main interest of qualitative unstructured and semi-structured interviews is the perspectives and storytelling from the participant (Bryman 2016:466). The flexibility of the interviews is also generally described as the main suitability for qualitative research (Bryman 2016, Mason 2018:31). Occurrences of that the interviewee takes the lead and brings the conversation towards neighbouring and relevant topics is encouraged (Bryman 2016:466). This has been proven also during this study.

The interviews were conducted through videocalls, often through the software Zoom, and were recorded. One of the participants preferred to do the interview through a regular phone call during which the phone was put on speaker-mode which was recorded through the inbuilt voice-memo software on a MacBook Pro.

4.4 Sampling

Sampling strategies may be more closely associated with the characteristics of quantitative research and the requirement of the sampling of reaching a level of representation of a large research population. Qualitative sampling is in contrast more open and allows researchers to think broadly about the meaning of sampling and selecting (Mason 2018).

Mason's (2018) preferred interpretation of qualitative sampling is a set of "principles and procedures used to identify and gain access to relevant data sources […] and to select from them for the purposes of gaining meaningful insights ". This point of view has inspired the sampling technique used for this study.

In accordance with the aim and research questions of this study a purposive sampling was used. The definition of purposive sampling is a sampling strategy where the researcher has the research's goal in mind and the research questions act as a guideline (Bryman 2016:408). The strategy demands that the researcher is clear with which criteria will be relevant for the inclusion in the sample (ibid.). This study asks for insights from a specific kind of informants. The purpose of the sampling was to get in touch which CEOs or other senior/administrative officials within Swedish public housing companies. In comparison with more junior employees within the organisations, the senior professionals were deemed more suitable and able to provide fruitful insights for the interviews, due to their access to a more overview perspective of the company and its policies.

Although the informants working "out on the field" would possibly be more able to provide more first-hand insights of the daily ground-level work of the housing companies and its daily interactions with the tenants in the concerned areas. This focus would however demand a reformulation of the study's aim and research questions.

This answers the question of *who* shall be included in the sample (Mason 2018). Further questions a sampling strategy shall provide answers for are *where* and *how* (Mason 2018). A purposive strategy has been used for the question of *where*, criteria relevant for this were municipal public housing companies in Sweden that administrate a substantial part of the rental apartments in its municipality/city. Certain priority has been given to municipalities that have at least one area defined as "vulnerable".

The researcher has reached out with an invitation to participate to the companies that have had easily accessible contact information to the relevant senior professionals. As only some of the companies had contact information such as email address directly to the CEO or similar person, general contact forms were often used. To be directed to the targeted professional was a lengthy process and often resulted in no response at all, thus limiting the overall participant number.

The sample size consists of five representatives from five public housing companies. These have been the municipal housing companies in the municipalities of: Borås, Gothenburg, Jönköping, Lund and Norrköping.

The size of the sample has been considered adequate to both meet the minimum requirement of the study and to be enough to reach theoretical saturation. The five unique municipalities are socially and demographically composed differently, thus a heterogeneity of the population is ensured. Four of the sampled municipalities have vulnerable areas and adheres to the scope and specificity of the research questions. Only Lund municipality lacks an neighbourhood officially defined as vulnerable by NOA, the inclusion of Lund is however justified by that the initiatives and measures of LKF can be compared with the others. All the municipalities still have in common that they have specific urban areas that are more *socially vulnerable than* others.

4.6 Analysis method

The interviews have been transcribed using the audio software audacity for playback and Microsoft Word as text handler. The decision to transcribe the record material was made in order to have the data more easily accessible in text, for memory keeping, and allowing a thorough and repeated examination of the interviewees' answers. This is in accordance with Heritage's points of the advantages of transcribing interviews (Heritage 1984:238 / Bryman 2016:479)

The transcripts are as truthful to the source as possible but is not an exact and word-for-word representation of the recordings. This is firstly due to the inherent difference between spoken and written language. Spontaneous speech seldom follows grammatical rules nor comes in complete and clear sentences. The author has therefore taken the freedom to rewrite the

testimonies into more comprehensible readable text. The same goes for dialectal or personal characteristics of the language that would have rendered the text difficult to read. Secondly the quotes that will be presented below have passed through a language barrier as they have been translated from Swedish to English by the researcher.

The transcribed interviews have subsequently been coded in order to highlight interesting passages and recurring narratives. *Coding* is the term used here for this procedure, but it should not be confused with the inclusion of numbers (codes) as suggested by Bryman (2016:246), which secondly mostly is associated with quantitative studies. The argument here is rather that the decipher of transcribed answers to the proposed open-ended questions still need to be put into the context of the research questions and themes of the current study. The procedure of transferring the passages of the respondents into the established themes is therefore here referred to as coding. This argument gains support by the referral to codes in the qualitative context as: thematic, descriptive, interpretive or conceptual (Mason 2018:194) which are used to index the data in order to retrieve them more easily (ibid.).

Coding open-ended questions usually requires that the answers are read and reread several times in order to make sense of what has been said and to put them into certain themes (Bryman 2016:200; 246). The four themes established in the interview guide have formed the structure of the data sheet onto which these passages and narratives have been transferred. This structure is what Bryman (2016:246) refers to as a *coding frame*. Narratives from the five interviews that form observable patterns have been grouped together into sub-themes.

The choice of this coding procedure has been based on the advice of Mason (2018:195), the codes (themes) have been devised in order to make sense in the study. The coding has been made manually based on the advice of the same author (ibid.) who says that coding software can allure to the idea that the coding itself is the main event of one's research and thus divert the researcher from the main cause of the study.

4.7 Ethical Consideration

No ethical issues according to the ethical research principles (Bryman 2016:125) have been identified in this study. The topic is not sensitive in the sense that it is connected to the personal integrity of one single individual or to a specific group. The persons interviewed are

all public servants and their testimonies have referred to the operation of municipal housing companies. The information that has been shared in the interviews has not been sensitive information and is otherwise publicly accessible.

5 Analysis and discussion

Five representatives from public housing companies in five different municipalities have been interviewed for this study. They are: *Bostäder I Borås* in Borås [BiB], *Vätterhem* in Jönköping [V-Hem], The umbrella organisation for various local public landlords: *Förvaltning AB Framtiden* in Gothenburg, *Hyresbostäder* in Norrköping [NKPG] and *LKF* in Lund [LKF]. Four of these five municipalities have at least one area present on the NOA list, whereas Lund does not.

Below, the findings from these interviews will be presented following the structure made up by the four underlying themes: The NOA definition, Integration of tenants, Key areas of focus and social capital.

5.1 The NOA Definition

5.1.1 The use of the definition.

Four out of five interviewed representants state that they do not internally use the definitions used by the National Operative Agency i.e. *vulnerable* and *particularly vulnerable* areas. Interestingly, each company chose to use a unique label when referring to those specific areas that in some aspect have been extra challenging or worth extra amount of attention. These alternative labels have been *unique areas*, *prioritised areas* and *focus areas*. Regardless of the terminology each individual company prefers, the term vulnerable area will be used throughout the presentation of the data and ensuing discussion below in order to facilitate consistency.

> *I don't use to say particularly vulnerable areas, I usually say particularly unique areas. Because I find them unique, like they have so much competence, so much talent.* [BiB]

Jönköping Municipality chooses to say prioritised areas instead and that is considerably more agreeable I think [Vhem]

They are like whichever other city district but I would say we use areas of focus, maybe. That we focus on one specific district so to say. [NKPG]

The fourth term was provided by the representative of the Lund company. The case here is a little bit different. As the municipality lacks an area defined as vulnerable, they cannot use the term as such of any of their areas. Instead, there is another label to which they have found an alternative.

We don't have any enormous areas, however we do have three 60's-areas, so we don't call them million program areas [LKF]

Regarding the motivation for using these alternative labels instead of the NOA definition vulnerable, there are two interpretations. Firstly, the companies are refraining from both internally and externally using the label *vulnerable* as it has become a stigmatising label. The definition *vulnerable* has a negative connotation to it, it implicitly says something about the inhabitants of these areas and has become rather pejorative. With the reference to Wacquant (2007:67) the broad use of such label strengthens a discourse of vilification and the created image that these areas are dangerous to visit or that they are only a place for the lowest tiers of society.

[LKF] says that the million program areas have a negative label, indicating something which they don't see representing those of their areas that happens to have been built during that program. "We have some challenges [there], absolutely but […] we have a high demand, we do not have considerably more disturbances in these areas than in other residential areas". The [BiB] representative say that is not a not a definition that they would like to identify themselves with. "I don't feel vulnerable, but I feel unique, I feel that I have many possibilities" therefore the areas are labelled as unique.

When you have such a definition it says quite a lot about, not the identity in the area but it says something about others perception and what challenges we have [NKPG]

The common image is sometimes very unfair and one believes that [this] is a ghetto and there is nothing of value here. [NKPG]

Secondly the companies simply do not seem to have a need to use the police's definition. They have been aware of the specific characteristics of the defined areas for a long time before the Police coined the three different definitions with the first publication of the NOA-list in 2015.

We have probably always had, or at least for a very long time, had some kind of insight that a slightly different administration is required in these areas, completely regardless of how you define them [Fr]

Even without the definition is it quite easy, when you live in a city, you know which the "vulnerable" areas are to some extent, they allow themselves to be geographically defined, even for ordinary people, and there are some challenges with that. [Fr]

After all, Norrköping is a fairly small city and there is no one who does not know which neighbourhoods we have challenges in or where there are different types of social structures that are not positive [...] and this is no secret, it is not even something that needs clarification [NKPG]

An overview of the neighbourhoods shows that the majority if not all of them are in one way or another geographically delimited from the main part of the city centre. This separation is done by either physical distance or some other kind of barrier such as an industrial area, forest, a highway or railroad tracks.

Due to many of these areas being so geographically defined, the discourse of otherness around these areas is sustained. It is easier to maintain an image of an area as rough when you also can talk about it as the area across "the tracks".

Combined with that the majority of the overall population might never have a reason to venture to "the other side of the tracks" the social seclusion of the areas adds up to a stigmatising effect of the area and its inhabitants. The following quote explains how Vätterhem experience Råslätt, that along with their two other suburban areas is much more definable in its characteristics and current challenges, for better and for worse, than the "better off" quarters they have in central Jönköping.

It is so apparent for us that it is three prioritised areas, it is Österängen, Öxnehaga and Råslätt and then it is City and you know that City is all and nothing, it is sort of not possible to measure in the same way. It is crammed in among all other inhabitants so it doesn't work and that is sort of one of the challenges, to say "OK, what shall we do [in the areas] and how shall we work in City?" [V-hem]

Demography is one of the important factors for how the work in the suburbs are focused. The vulnerable areas or million program areas are characterised by the majority of households having a low socio-economic status. They are therefore seen as more demographically homogenous compared to the more central parts of the city where more affluent parts of the population dilute these factors.

5.1.2 Different lenses

Furthermore, another reason for that the police's definition is not used is because it is a definition used with parameters of which the public housing companies do not have a use. When it comes to defining an area for what it is, the perspective of the police is perceived as a bit more one-sided than the one of the companies. The companies perceive themselves as having a more nuanced view of the area as they are more present all-year-long and have to concern the interest of the tenants. In contrast the concern of the police is expanded to the interest of the greater society.

We experience that the police only have one side, that they only have one picture of how things are.
[Vhem]

So you have to bear in mind that the police do a police assessment, so it is a police lens on an area. If it is calm in an area and it is not these criminal structures and the police does not feel that the need to invest resources, then they make different assessments. [FR]

Their assessment will always be their [own] assessment. If one takes an area such as Biskopsgården, then the police is interested in primarily 150 individuals and we are interested in perhaps 7000 individuals, if you understand what I mean, they are our tenants [FR]

The lens through which the police regard an area is described as tainted by the mission of the police authority e.g.: crime prevention, interventive actions and to detain violators. These

tasks regarding criminality are something the housing companies do and should have very little to do with. The lens of the landlord companies is different. Their mission is firstly to rent out apartments and to care for the upkeep of and around the properties in the area. Secondly bearing the role of a public beneficial (allmännyttan) housing company, they have a social mission. What they have to do with criminality is to act proactively so it never happens, or reactively when it has happened.

However, the perspectives of the two operations shall not be seen as incompatible with each other. It is rather so that they represent two circles overlapping on a Venn-diagram whereas the circles also cover other aspects the other one does not. For example, the socio-economic level in a neighbourhood is something that may qualify for extra focus but for various reasons. And it is indeed so that the housing companies, through briefing with the police, have been influential in the process of creating the NOA list.

We are in involved different briefings or when the police defines [the areas] or when they are doing their investigative work. We sit and answer questions, so we are also there when [the areas] are on their way onto these lists, we are those who in some way makes it happen. [NKPG]

A piece of constructive criticism aimed towards the police can be distinguished in the wish that they were more present (Vätterhem). There is a wish for that they had the resources, time and willingness to make themselves more visible by patrolling, to create alliances with the regulars, to make use the words of Kelling and Wilson (1982). The following anecdote came up during the interview with the Vätterhem representative which pictures this quite well.

During a tour to assess the physical environment in one of the areas a group of representants from the housing company, local associations and the local police passed an elementary school. A group of five graders came up to the group. The children's initial reaction was to ask if anything had happened since the police was there.

They were straight on like that, with this sort of weird attitude honestly, or [maybe not] weird, but I cannot interpret it in another way than that it is unfortunately so that the police are simply not enough out walking and talking to people. It is more of a happening when the police comes. [V-hem]

The representative had had it confirmed by some colleagues in the area that the police have had the tendency park the police car on the local square but hardly stepping out of it. A

certain comprehension was expressed for that it could have been a safety precaution due to the raised threat level towards police officers after recent events but with the sentiment that it gave negative signals.

It becomes difficult to work preventively if you do not even talk to those who are 10 years old, and there the police have a great deal of work to do [V-hem]

5.1.3 Political action

As described above the NOA lists and definitions have not had a particular eye-opening effect on the housing companies, they were in many cases aware of the current situation and played an important role in creating these lists in the first place.

Before this strategy and before the police, before this became so relevant, we had also a certain reinforcement of resources [Fr]

What is recurring throughout the data collection is, however, how the representants have experienced a shift in attention from municipal politicians. As the public housing companies are politically directed, they have seen a greater change after this shift. The politicians have been more explicit about that something needs to be done and the directives have pointed accordingly. By the testimonies it seems like the companies were waiting for this shift, that the politicians should finally see and comprehend something they already knew. As soon as they had the green light of the new directives it is expressed as if that the housing companies took the leading role in implementing the new strategies in ways they deemed as most fruitful.

Bostäder i Borås has said together with the city of Borås that we must work together in these areas to get them off this list. Bostäder I Borås has then taken on the leadership role in this work. [BiB]

It is very noticeable now, I think, that Jönköping municipality is paying more attention to these prioritised areas in terms of resources, how to work in these areas. [Vhem]

The Gothenburg city council made a budget for 2020, and in that budget, it was stated that Gothenburg should not have any particularly vulnerable areas by 2025, and in order to meet that

ambition, we formulated […] a strategy that shall work precisely for moving these areas off the police list because that's where the jury is in this case [Fr]

The companies have together with the municipality set up different goals and parameters for the areas. The goals are expressed differently from city to city. This is natural due to differing characteristics of the municipalities in ways such as range of severity of challenges in the suburbs, quantity of challenged suburbs and political composition of the municipalities. It still becomes clear that all cases show a shift for change that goes in the same direction. One such change is the ambition to work in a long-term perspective in contrast to the shorter narrow initiatives of the 90's and 2000's.

We are grateful that they have been so clear in their assessments that it has created a dialogue about it politically as well, and a better understanding that segregation manifests itself in a way that no one is served by. [Fr]

We don't want these [short-term strategies] like in the 90s and 2000s that were characterised by projects in one year, projects in two years then it disappears. [NKPG]

5.1.4 The areas

When it comes to what difference the housing companies make between the vulnerable areas and other areas the answer is, hardly anything. The companies express that there is nothing they can or cannot do in the vulnerable areas that they do in other areas or vice-versa. The core task of the companies is the same all-over their areas regardless of whether one of them is defined as vulnerable and the others are not. The companies do not agree with the image that the neighbourhoods should be more dangerous than other parts of the city. Thus, there are not any descriptions of any special routines in terms of elevated security measures for example. The fact that one neighbourhood is defined as vulnerable, and another similar neighbourhood is not, is for reasons that are outside the company's influence in the first place.

This shows a certain detachment from the common image of the vulnerable areas among outsiders. This detachment is notable in the preferred use of alternative definitions. Many representants describe the areas as having their inherent challenges but they also express how

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they are able to perceive the areas' strengths and positive sides. The labels put on the neighbourhoods has meant that more resources have been put into those areas, this does not mean that other areas have been neglected.

We care just as much about our other areas that do not carry this label as our areas that do. What we do in one area, we can still do in all areas. I mean, all areas need a playground. Children are children regardless of where they live. [BiB]

The resources are distributed [evenly] and we don't think about this exposed area definition, but we do the same. It's the same maintenance. It is really important for a housing company to maintain the same level in the various areas, I would say. [Vhem]

So we are not only working in the neighbourhoods that are vulnerable, but also in neighbourhoods that have been or are about to become [NKPG]

It is more fair to describe the extra effort put into the vulnerable areas as focused measures. For example, Borås municipality was at the time of the interview, only at the very start of its new strategy that involved a newly appointed district development manager. *Bostäder i Borås* have chosen to only implement certain measures in one of the two vulnerable areas in order to be able to evaluate possible effects before moving forward with the project in the other area. Representants from both the companies in Gothenburg and Norrköping describe that the targeting measures are kept implemented even after the point that the areas have been removed from the defining NOA list. This is important due to the longevity aspect; it also proves the statement above that the NOA definition has no real influence on the practical operation of the companies.

We try to see it as a whole, we have a couple of areas that we need to put more effort into, based on various reasons. Then it is very important not to forget everyone else so to speak, all the other seniors, all the other tenants, all the other children and all other young people. We all have needs regardless of whether you are "vulnerable" or not [BiB]

When we started with the strategy we had six particularly vulnerable areas, now in 2021 Tynnered went down according to the police's assessment so now we have five. The strategy still covers [all] the six areas and it also covers to a certain extent problem areas that link to these areas because they are, after all, geographical areas [FR]

5.2 Integration of tenants

5.2.1 Influence and communication

The social mission of *allmännyttan* includes to ensure a social sustainability part of which is the inclusion of the residents in the public discussion.

I feel that I have a lot of talents and knowledge that you could have taken part in if you just started talking to me [BiB]

One representative [BiB] describes it as that the authorities, public servants, and other civil society organisations previously have failed to invite those that live and operate in the neighbourhoods into the discussion. The will and engagement to make a change for the better has always been there but historically has it been done above the heads of those who are affected the most. Nowadays all municipal housing companies describe in one way or another that one main objective is to act close *to* and close *with* the residents.

And I put myself in everyone's shoes and think - this is how I would like it in my area - and I think that those I work for would also have liked to have it that way in their area. I know that because I have talked to them and not about them. [BiB]

It is not difficult to understand that you have to be more present to a higher degree out in the areas, but exactly how to be present in order to have the best effect, it is not that simple. [Fr]

The goal is clearly depicted as to make real and lasting changes. However, the question of how the goal will be realised in reality is a reoccurring theme. That question would most probably be much more difficult to answer if the company was completely detached from the tenants' influence. Luckily, they are not completely detached, as various arenas are provided to allow the resident to give their opinion. The tenant's agency (hyresgästföreningen) is an actor through which the influence of the tenants is channelled. The agency organises meetings for its members, the tenants living in the area, to discuss important matters.

Our customer managers meet representatives of the local tenants' association where they also go over planned maintenance efforts, remodelling efforts, development of the outdoor environment, problems, etc. to bring about an influence from the tenants. [LKF]

This chain of communication starts on the tenant's grassroot level and is through the housing companies conveyed towards real action and upwards to the top-level of the municipal politicians.

The examples of areas of influence range from the outside spaces, such as design of public areas, playground etcetera. In two interviews art installations in particular comes up as examples of how to increase involvement, integration and the sense of pride of one's area. The idea explained by the LKF represantent is that children are invited to design their own art pieces which then are installed in the public place. This initiative has two benefits, firstly it creates a sense of pride for both the decorations and the area itself. Secondly the representative says that this also decreases the incitements for vandalism as the older siblings would be less inclined to destroy something that their younger siblings have created. This last statement is maybe not necessarily true when it comes to sibling relations in general. The sense of home is, however, increased when the inhabitants have a personal relationship to the objects around them. Here there is support for Wacquant's (2007) notion of place, the familiarity of a physical space is ameliorated when the cultural sense of "we" is increased by public decorations like this.

When it comes to the indoor environment the tenants of LKF find influence in that they have a slight say in the rent level. The tenants can choose to opt out of repainting jobs or the exchange of house appliances that is scheduled to be done every 10 year-or-so period. In exchange for a lower living standard, they can get a certain discount on the rent.

There are many who choose the latter, which is good from an environmental point of view. We also use our resources as long as possible, so it is somewhat connected just to the influence of the residents themselves [LKF].

5.2.2 Ownership of the issue

There is an understanding of the importance to get the tenants on board with new decisions and initiatives. These initiatives are after all implemented in the attempt to make it better for those that live in the area and less so for the sake of outsiders. The housing companies emphasise the weight of the thoughts, ideas, and opinions of the tenants themselves.

If we are going to do the work in Borås as a housing company, we should do it together with those who live there and stop labelling them for different things when we haven't even done the work with them. [BiB]

One sign of the success that has been expressed by two different representants is when the areas have become places where it is pleasant to live, where people choose to move into not only because they have to. In order to reach this point, it is crucial to treat the current inhabitants with respect and to consider them as equals who would probably have the same expectations of a nice area as anybody else.

Because no one wants to come and live in an area where they think it's awful, everyone wants to make it better for themselves, their children and so on. And I usually see it as simply as if you as a civil servant [...] can move into such an area or send your children to schools there, then you have succeeded in such an area. [BiB]

It is our aspiration that it should be optional for everyone, that everyone should want to live there. It should be nice and you should feel good when you live there. [...] The entire goal of the work that we do, is for example that they should be such areas where people actually choose to live, not where you shun and move away as soon as you get the chance. [NKPG]

A discussion concerning resources and ownership of the issue was brought up. The tenants own the issue of the neighbourhoods as it is their homes that are concerned. They are also the ones who are the victims of the insecurity, the gang criminality, the stigmatisation of the area and so on. But the tenants are also scarce in resources, resources that the landlord companies are able to provide. The companies are therefore in a power position above the tenants which thus calls for the importance of listening to their voices.

We talk a lot about resourcefulness, what issues do we own, what can we do based on the premise that we own the properties and then it happens that as an individual actor we can do the most, we are the single most important municipal or state actor to work with the social issues [Fr]

The companies can also be assigned ownership of the issue, compared to other public actors. The housing companies have a closer to heart interest in the well-being of the areas. A crude way to put it is that since because they are housing business actors their primary interest lies

in the rentability of the apartments in the areas. This aspect is naturally diluted by their role as public housing companies. The point is that they own and know of the issue better than other public authorities and thus have an important influential role in.

We have probably found our niche in recent years actually, we own the properties, and we somehow understand the value of working with these issues because it affects us so much in relation to other actors, I mean we get a fairly clear reduction in value for example if a district becomes "vulnerable" [NKPG]

Key concepts in this reasoning are expressed as to create relations with the tenants, gain their trust. Through communication, organisation, and mobilisation the housing companies create grounds for an increased collective ability among the neighbourhood inhabitants.

This organising and mobilising part is not only about other organisations but it is very much about the residents as well, there is an encounter in which I think we can play a key role in bringing these different perspectives together. [NKPG]

5.2.3 Work and labour market related actions

Being the public actor that is most present on the ground out in the suburbs the housing companies are valuable in the cooperation with other public actors. It has been described how they have inspired other organisations to work out there closer to the targeted demography. Several examples have been given of how the housing companies take an organising role around different labour market initiatives.

The municipality has become significantly more interested and it is even so that they understand that if municipal operations are not out in the area, then you do not reach that type of certain citizens. [Vhem]

The companies have been both the receiving end and sometimes the creator of different projects to increase the employability of the neighbourhood residents. For example, they have themselves employed the local youth to work during the summers, they worked with different organisations and were funded by EU funds to help unemployed citizens to establish themselves on the labour market. Targeting the unemployment is described as a long-term step towards a greater standard of living in the areas.

So, you get to work for three weeks and get paid and so this with getting a good first contact with working life and seeing LKF as a possible future employer and above all, to sort of create contacts between young people from different residential areas and to create a pride in their residential areas that you contribute to keeping them clean and tidy. [LKF]

And we are also working with job lifting initiatives, we will establish something that we are currently calling job hubs out in these particularly vulnerable areas which will simply be physical places where we will then work to attract both the employment agency but also companies that have recruitment needs. [Fr]

5.2.4 Employees

The housing companies are influential "upwards" and outwards while the employees of the companies are influential "downwards" and "inwards". The representatives ascribe a great deal of importance to the ones working with the regular property keeping task of the company. They are the ones working side by side with the tenants, sometimes even inside their homes; so in one way they may be regarded as the main component in the making of an alliance with the residents. Some companies give their employees specific courses in order to better accommodate the needs of the tenants.

I think this way, the extremely important thing and of which I am so proud from Vätterhem's side, is that we have our own staff. That the staff is visible outside, picking up rubbish, keeping it clean and tidy, we spend incredible sums on maintenance. [Vhem]

Our employees have received training in how to think and act and how to see signs when things are not right and then, similarly, how to make a report of concern to social services, how it is done and who to contact when it is warranted. And then it's up to the employees to act when they notice that it's not right here [LKF]

The police talk a lot about setting boundaries on the one hand and building relationships on the other, those are the two words they use, we also use those words when we talk about our security hosts, and how they should work. They are themselves in the areas and shall in some way create increased security, especially in the areas, outside the apartments, evenings and weekends. [Fr]

What can be seen here is that housing companies inhibit the role as order-keeper through their employees. The property managers still do not have the same authority as a police

officer, but they exert the same relation creating presence and control of social norms as the foot-patrolling police officer does in Kelling's and Wilsons's (1982) example. With further referral to Kelling and Wilson (1982), the employed property managers can play a significant role by being available to receive complaints and other opinions of the residents. By having the opportunity to easily call or simply walking up to the property manager responsible for the home street or apartment building and talk about an experienced problem the tenant can feel that they have been listened to and have done something about the problem.

5.2.5 A credible enforcer

In this theme we have seen support for Esaiasson's (2020) statement that the housing companies are a strong actor, a *credible enforcer*. Esaiasson (2020) mentioned that the key characteristic for a credible enforcer is that it holds a leading role, has gained trust and credibility from the led people, and have the power to reward, punish but also to provide. The companies have achieved the leading role when it comes to the developmental work of the areas because they have shown themselves as more knowledgeable of the areas than other societal actors. Thus, they have gained credibility in the topic. One representant expressed how their company made the deliberate and active choice to take the leading role and go all-in with the invested resources in order to reach the set goals for the concerned suburban areas.

We are quite far in our definition of room for action, so we are committed and have connected to the schools, connected to creating work and so on. A property owner who defines their mission more narrowly does not do that, I would say. [Fr]

The companies have gained trust from the tenants, the main owners of the issue by showing themselves willing to involve the tenants and adhering to their voices and opinions. Another important factor to the trust gaining is that the companies have their own employees that work with the caretaking of the properties and are seen working within the neighbourhoods daily. In essence they have more presence and thus gain more trust than the police do, as mentioned above.

We notice an extreme trust in us as a housing company and when we do something, people know and simply trust our staff and so on, but then there is the limit for what we should do and what others should do. [Vhem]

Holding the leadership role, the housing companies are also the main actor when it comes to collaborative and cross-field projects, such as labour market initiatives for example. In this way, the companies have the central role, pulling strings and cooperating with several different stakeholders and actors.

What we see as our role [is that] we may not be the ones who can provide the area with education or jobs either, but on the other hand we see an interest in people getting jobs, our role is more about mobilising the forces that exist, which do these things outside our organisation. [NKPG]

It has even come to that they must decline certain projects due to a lack of time or ask themselves if the proposed project goes in line with the set aim and objectives. The third trait of a credible enforcer is to possess a certain power. Esaiasson (2020) mention the ability to reward or punish and brings up giving of fines and evictions as the last resort as examples. This might have to do with resources and the ability to provide these resources. Namely the spatial resource materialised in locales and public spaces.

As a housing company we cannot do everything, but we really have to join hands with others. [Vhem]

What has been most interesting about our work is that we work in partnerships where we connect certain stakeholders to certain areas in which we work more intensively with some kind of platform, it can be a meeting place [...] where people but also stakeholders can meet in dialogue and collaboration. [NKPG]

5.2.6 Suspicion from and towards the suburb residents

Concerning the prejudice of outsiders that the suburbs should be dangerous to "ordinary" people. The image seems to be that the vulnerability of the areas means that one would get assaulted if one went there. That image is not true which was brought up by one representative in the following insight. The context is when the individuals have errands to make in the suburbs in the role of representative for the housing company and greater civil society:

We have had on a few occasions that if you come in a larger group of somewhat well-established, white, above-middle-class people, as we have sometimes come, then you can get a few questions about what we do there. [Fr]

During these occasions the group distinguish themselves from the regulars in the area, it becomes apparent that they are outsiders. The point the interviewee wanted to make was that they regardless never experienced anything unpleasant during their visits. However, the part about being asked what they are doing there is saying something, namely that this situation is comparable with the above-mentioned anecdote about the police. That anecdote pointed out how it is perceived as that something extraordinary is happening or that someone had done something and will be "taken" by the police when the police were in the area.

In the same way may it be interpreted as that something is about to happen when a group of professional outsiders are coming to the area, or that they want something from the residents. This can be explained by the assumption by the residents that they are under constant supervision and control by the state, outsiders or even "the Swedes". Then there is an inherent constant negative connection to the involvement of authorities in the area, linked to previous experience of such phenomena.

5.3 Areas of focus

5.3.1 Outside areas
The state of the outside environment in the neighbourhoods is mentioned by all the housing company representatives as a min area of focus. A certain weight is put on that the neighbourhoods shall appear neat and tidy which in turn shall increase the sense of pride and security in the area. This acts as support for what Esaiasson (2020) wrote, that littering is a major and recurring problem in the suburbs and that the landlords invest many resources into cleaning up.

Right now, we have looked at the external environment and how to strengthen meeting places all around, and this also applies to other areas. [BiB]

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We really do our part, I would say, to counteract this feeling that "we don't even dare to go to that area" but rather that it is prosperous neighbourhoods based on the physical [aspects] [Vhem]

We have our own staff when it comes to housekeeping and property management, because keeping our residential areas neat and tidy and fixing everything broken is the basis for creating well-being and security, so we have a lot of focus on that. [LKF]

Incorporated in this area of focus is also the creation of meeting places. Meeting places are here considered the spots where residents can meet to spend time together and thus create social bonds and share values: playgrounds, grilling-sites and other recreational areas. By assuring that these spots are well lit, tidy, and equipped accordingly the housing companies welcomes the residents to spend time in the public space. This adds a social value of the neighbourhood for the individuals and more frequent use of the public spaces is also seen as increasing the sense of security.

The housing companies have all been clear on the importance of creating what Wacquant (2007) called *places* a somewhere where the neighbourhood inhabitants together can share emotions, understanding and time. The contrary movement, the dissolution of such places to create *spaces* (ibid.) still proves a challenge within the areas. An example of this is how the neighbourhood Rannebergen, not a vulnerable area since the 2021 update o NOA-list, for a long time have had empty business premises around the local square and only recently had a grocery store moving in.

We know quite well what a well-functioning square is, a local square for it to work, and to get the community to come there, health centres, pharmacies, grocery stores, etc. is very important. […] Now Rannebergen became an example because it has been a bit tough there and a grocery store closed and now it has been depressing for many years, because a dead surface is not a safe surface [Fr]

We also have here a clear reference to the theory of broken windows. The various testimonies speak for an awareness of the process of suburban decline in Kelling's and Wilson's (1982) theory. One representative even mentioned it explicitly that it is a model the housing company is working after. It is worth mentioning that it is the literal sense of the theory that is used here. The companies repair the first broken window or pick the first littered soda can as soon as it is noticed.

The wider definition of a zero-tolerance towards crime that has been representing the theory in the criminology literature (Harcourt 1998) is not seen here. This suggests that the broken windows theory is better adapted to the urban development field than to the policing field. Neither is it within the operational scope of the housing companies to drive away socially disruptive elements – individuals – from the vicinity. The practical aspects of order-keeping and crime prevention remains a task of the police as discussed above.

That you fix things immediately, that you are quick about it. […] this whole bit is super important so to get a feeling that we haven't abandoned the people. [Vhem]

We work a lot with, for example. the "broken windows" theory, we can work with that as soon as there is graffiti and vandalism, it should go away, there should be zero tolerance for such things. [FR]

The careful ensuring of a high aesthetic standard in the area is about sending signals. One signal is that littering, and the occasional broken property is never allowed to be the new state of normality. The upkeep of an area also sends the signal that neither the area nor its people are abandoned.

The establishment of social spots also finds support in Kelling and Wilson's (1982) article. By getting to know each other the neighbours can create social norms of expectations and share social values between each other. This results in a self-assertiveness of the neighbourhood towards the breaking of these norms by outsiders.

5.3.2 Welfare, Security, integration in the neighbourhoods

The aim for increased welfare, security and integration in the suburbs is another point of focus for the public housing companies. This goal is conceptualised by welfare indicators in Vätterhem and by declarations of purpose in Norrköping.

Vätterhem pays extra attention to four of the 20 welfare indicators picked by Jönköping municipality. The aim is that of the indicators employment rate, health, level of education and voting frequency shall the neighbourhoods have reached the municipal average by 2040. The width of this ambition requires the company to be a central actor in the vulnerable areas when it comes to collaboration with other civil society actors, such as the healthcare and school systems.

We have now set out a direction and we know where we are going and we know what we are capable of. [Vhem]

5.3 Social capital

Social capital has in this study been understood as the ability to work and act together towards a common goal or interest. The social capital within a geographical area is also considered to be stronger if its residents have social bonds that reach further than the immediate family or cultural group. Some strategies to nurture social capital have been described above, for example tenant influence and the provision of places for social gathering. Another strategy that is used by most of the housing companies is creating different social events. Community days or theme days are such an example. A community day is often neighbourhood based, arranged for its residents. There is entertainment and activities, and food and fika is provided. The arranging landlord company and other interest groups take the opportunity to get in touch with the residents, showing themselves present and available for receiving insights and opinion. The main point of these actions is to create a sense of community which also can be done in a smaller scale. In Bergsjön, Gothenburg the local housing company occasionally offers a cup of coffee and a chat. In Jönköping there is a certain tenant's fund from which residents can get an allowance for arranging a common activity such as grilling together.

In conclusion there are several initiatives taken to create social cohesion. One representative gave the insight of the importance of creating different *we's or us's* based on different context. This insight is likely nurtured by the literature of the bridging social capital. In contrast to the similarity of the bonding social capital is the strength of the bridging social capital in heterogeneity and the openness and acceptance it tends to give.

And by creating different we's, I broaden my social surface, influence, acceptance and my presence, etc. In many of these areas often there is perhaps a strong cultural we but the cultural we, if you are part of the Somali association or something else, it does not always build a community, it can rather build suspicion and distance against other cultural groups. [Fr]

5.4.1 Civil society

According to studies from several institutes the civil society is an important collaboration partner in the preventive work within the areas (Hallin 2020). The companies lift the strength and unifying power of the civil society as well. This strength was exemplified by two representatives through events happening around the easter riots. During the easter week of 2022 several Swedish cities were affected by violent riots, mostly targeting the police. The igniting factor for the riots was a series of anti-Islam demonstrations of a right-wing extreme individual during which the Quran was lit on fire. An already existing resentment towards the police force was intensified by that the police had, in the name of freedom of speech, allowed the demonstrations to take place.

In Råslätt, Jönköping a riot never occurred thanks to that the local priest rang the church bells to interrupt the speech of the extremist. Norrköping, had the worst riots in terms of violence, damaged public property and wounded police officers. The NKPG representative stated that two weeks after the civil society of the neighbourhood Navestad had rallied as to say that it was not standing behind the violence.

The good forces began to organise themselves and we made something positive out of all this. We brought together several hundred youths in football tournaments and did positive things together with the residents, it's not visible at all, it doesn't come across. [NKPG]

The essence here is that these positive aspects had not, at the time of the interviews, gotten the same amount of recognition in the media coverage.

Dikeç (2016) wrote about the pathologic perspective, the tendency to see the bad as coming from inside the suburbs. In contrast, the housing companies are successful in seeing the good coming from the inside of the neighbourhoods. The testimonies from the companies speak of a will to lift the positive sides of the neighbourhoods conceptualised in a strong civil society. And even if the civil society do not always prevent the outbursts of riots as happened in Råslätt is it always there afterwards to mend.

The companies appear as influential in the process of creating this strong civil society.
It is described how they in Lund have worked with the "house courage"-model. This model was originally created the prevent domestic violence. It comprises of reinforcing the civil courage of tenants and staff to alarm and react when they notice anything suspicious.

6 Conclusion

6.1 What weight do the housing companies put on the "NOA labels" in the work for improving the areas?

The companies prefer to use other labels for the areas under their administration that face certain challenges, as alternatives to the NOA definition *vulnerable area.* Four different examples of such labels have been presented: *Focus areas, Prioritised areas and unique areas*, and in the case where there was no NOA defined neighbourhood the label *60's areas* was used instead. Two underlying reasonings behind this alternative usage have been found. Firstly, the NOA definition is perceived as being stigmatised and stigmatising, an alternative label has a more neutral connotation to it.

The use of alternative labels testifies that the housing companies understand that the use of the NOA-definitions fixates stigmatisation to the neighbourhoods, in accordance with Wacquant (2007). The testimonies from the companies are however not in accordance with what Wacquant says regarding what is transmitted through stigmatising labels are known by both the outsiders and the insiders, residents living there. The companies are as much insiders of the neighbourhoods as they are outsiders. They can thus share the experience with the residents that the neighbourhoods have certain valuable characteristics that are not known by the outside populous. The choice of words such as *unique* areas shall from this perspective not be seen as a way to gloss over the areas but should rather be seen as that the public housing companies *prioritise* the areas and *focus* on getting to terms with the challenges experienced there.

Secondly, the NOA definition is not defining the work of the companies in the concerned areas. The housing companies have contrarily had an awareness of the challenges in the areas prior the first use of this definition. Furthermore, the NOA definition is seemingly not useful from the public housing perspective as the definition primarily reflects the perspective and

lens of the police. These two perspectives differ significantly in some respects whereas they have common touching points regarding others. The companies do not express a general difference in modus operandi between areas defined differently in terms of resources. The tendency is that the perceived challenges are either targeted in focused initiatives or throughout all areas simultaneously.

The tenants of the same housing company living in different neighbourhoods have thus seemingly the same rights to different initiatives and activities organised by the housing companies and partners, regardless if one neighbourhood would be of better societal status than the other. An opportunity for a bridging exchange of social capital is thus made possible between the areas, suburbs and city centre.

The definition has however been proven useful for the continuous work of the housing companies in the concerned areas. All companies in a municipality with at least one *vulnerable* area have expressed that they have seen a shift of attention from municipal politicians. This shift has opened up for a wider use of resources towards the social improvement of the areas.

This aspect can be regarded as an opposite reaction to the stigmatising effect certain labels can have according to Wacquant (2007). On the contrary, the new policies the public housing companies refer to have no notion of the freedom to use any means necessary to get to the core of the problem. The suggestions of harder measures in suburbs from populistic politicians as exemplified by Dikeç (2016) are more readily found in crime prevention policies. The public housing companies distinguish themselves here further from the perspective of the police mentioned above.

6.2 How do representatives describe the company's task in improving the area?

The tasks described by the housing company's representatives reflect that they as a public housing company have *Allmännyttan* (the public's benefit) as its inherent social mission. Key concepts that have come up during the interviews are *communication*, *organisation*, and *mobilisation*. The testimonies show that there is a comprehension regarding that resident influence is crucial for a successful positive change. Therefore, a certain emphasis has been put on the inclusion of tenants living in the areas when it comes to the progressive work. This inclusion is described as giving the tenants a sense of representation and nurturing the

neighbourhoods' collective ability. For this cause the housing companies also describe various initiatives to enforcing the sense of community and a *we* among the tenants, such as collective festivities and other activities. These initiatives are regarded as investments in the bonding social capital, by which an increased collective ability of the neighbourhoods will help the residents to communicate and demand in accordance with their interests. This is in line with what previous studies have mapped out, namely important factors for achieving a positive outcome in the suburbs (Hallin & Westerdahl 2020).

The sense of community and *we* may also have long term effects in accordance with Kelling's and Wilson's (1982) theory of broken windows. In a community with a strong *we* people take more care for common values and of both community and individual property. In a neighbourhood with a strong we the ideal would be that disruptive elements such as rowdy teenagers would meet objections from the inhabitants. What would be a hindrance for this ideal situation is the fear of being harassed by criminal formations as a counterreaction to such boldness. The NOA defined aspect of criminals influence on the local community comes thus into the picture here. The police's work of decreasing the presence of those individuals or groups with a strong violent capital is important and has to go hand-in-hand with the civil-society's work on empowering the neighbourhoods and their inhabitants.

Another major point of the daily work of the housing companies' employees is to ensure that the neighbourhoods are neat and tidy. The expressed importance of reducing littering and broken features is a perspective derived from *the broken windows theory*.
According to this theory, ensuring a good physical standard of and around the facilities is expressed as a way to ensure the residents that they are not forgotten. The otherwise criminological theory of broken windows seems to be very well applicable for property managers and other actors within urban development. All housing companies exhibit the ambition to rally concerned actors, the residents, the civil society, municipal authorities and welfare services in order to tackle the challenges in the suburbs.

6.3 What role do the public housing companies have in the task to improve the social conditions in and reputation of an area?

The public housing companies are in many aspects the public actor that is the closest to the social challenges in the suburbs. They show an everyday presence that is unmatched by other

actors such as the police authority. The companies can be regarded as *credible enforcers*. They are within their area of influence seen as a legit actor that can both punish and reward behaviour among residents.

The companies employees, the facility care-takers, can through their everyday presence in some aspect take the role of the patrolling policeman in Kelling's and Wilson's (1982) article. By being present they can show an availability of the housing company and enable a swift remedy to newly occurred situations, as well as receiving everyday complaints. Being able to air their comments and complaints would according to Kelling and Wilson (1982) give the tenants an immediate sense of have done something about the experienced problem and have been listened to.

The police is in some aspects naturally better suited for the role of patrolling keeper of order, the reintroduction of community police officers in Swedish suburbs would increase the police's presence. The housing companies can be helpful in those cases where community polices is not a viable alternative. The housing companies have on many occasions shown that they have shouldered a leading role when it comes to various social and developing initiatives. In most cases have the companies been instrumental as communication hubs between other public actors and the local residents. By inviting the police to different occasions – presentations, community days, children's activity days etc. the housing companies can use this role to increase and normalise the police's presence.

The companies have in general a different perspective of the neighbourhoods than the wider populous. Effort is put into creating a positive image of the areas, not the least aimed towards the residents themselves. Through thematic neighbourhood days and inviting residents to influence the aesthetic layout of the neighbourhoods the sentiment of *community* is enhanced. The companies' representatives mentioned the importance of developing physical places that are both aesthetically pleasing and invites to the participation of and meeting between the inhabitants. One representative also mentioned the importance of paying attention to that the local commercial centre and its adjacent square was lively, active and well visited.

Both of these aspects contribute to what Wacquant (2007) would call the dissolution of *space* and creation of *place.* Thus the public housing companies play yet another important role in making the suburbs a neighbourhood a place in which to thrive.

6.4 Practical implications

The results from this study can be used to further adjust internal policies within any given public housing company that operates within and around areas that are defined as vulnerable areas. For example, how a company can improve and elaborate their socially focused work within their neighbourhoods and organisation overall. The results of this study can also be used as an argument for a continuous and revised communicative strategy between the housing companies and other public actors such as the municipality, the police, health care and school system.

6.5 Limitations

This study is as all other qualitative research challenged by issues of objectivity. The personal subjectivity of the researcher and their judgement taints and form the data set and result. It is nearly impossible to decode content analysis data without the interpretation of the researcher (Bryman 2016:305) and it is difficult to ensure that the perspectives of the research participants have not been mis-interpreted (Mason 2018:133).

This study has been limited by the width of its scope due to it being a master thesis, the inherit limited timeframe did not allow for a more advanced analysis. And as mentioned above a practical limitation was that the target group within some companies were difficult to reach, which resulted in a smaller sample.

6.6 Future Studies
This study has only scratched on the surface of the issue of the work within socio-economically challenged areas. The results would be even more interesting if the focus was on only one participating actor and going more into depth of their operations in relation to given policies. Other suggestions for future studies include incorporating the perspective of the employees of the housing companies that work in the areas on a daily basis. It would also be of interest to compare the perspectives presented in this study with results of the effects of criminality in the areas in question. This study can serve as inspiration for future studies that go more in-depth regarding statistics. Furthermore, more radical and progressive ideas on how to use the influence of public housing companies in the amelioration of the areas in question, and the studies of the effects of these ideas, are encouraged.

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Appendix A

<u>Interview guide</u>

The Definition

- How does the definition "exposed area" affect the way the company works in the affected area compared to other areas under the company's administration that do not have the definition?

- How does the company perceive the image of the company's various areas among the common man, and would you say that this image is fair or unfair?

Integration of tenants

- What role does the company play in improving the tenants' relationship with social institutions such as the police or primary care?

Focus areas

- Which concrete development areas do the company mainly focus on in order to improve the social standard in the various areas? Do these areas of development differ between the different geographical areas?

Social capital

- What role does/does the company play in promoting social cohesion among the residents?

- What measures are taken to promote and develop social interaction between the areas' different demographic groups?