



Different Problems, Similar Solutions

A WPR Analysis of Social Mix in Malmö's Urban Planning

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Abstract

Social mix has emerged as an essential planning ideal in contemporary urban development, with the assumption that greater diversity in housing tenure and population composition can lead to more socially sustainable communities. This study examines the implementation of social mix as a solution to solving the segregation problem in the city of Malmö. Through a comparative case study of two planning programmes, Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn, the study examines how segregation is represented at two contrasting ends of the socio-economic spectrum and what planning rationalities underpin the proposed interventions. The study is based on a qualitative document analysis with the help of Carol Bacchi's *What's the Problem Represented to Be?* (WPR) approach, as well as being complemented by descriptive quantitative data on housing tenure and socio-economic characteristics. The two cases illustrate contrasting views on segregation. In Holma-Kroksbäck, the primary problem representations revolve around physical isolation, uniformity in housing types and social and functional insufficiencies in the neighbourhood. Klagshamn, on the other hand, faces issues tied to demographic exclusion, housing stock uniformity and an imbalance within Malmö's broader housing supply. Yet, despite this difference in problem representations, both neighbourhoods rely on the same cure, that is diversifying housing types and tenure forms, but in opposite directions. The study concludes that Malmö's social mix strategies are underpinned by a shared planning rationality, the assumption that changes to the physical environment and tenure forms will automatically generate demographic diversification and broader social transformation. Therefore, even though the problem representations are framed differently in each of the neighbourhoods, the underlying planning rationality remains surprisingly consistent regardless of the socio-economic context with social mix remaining a similar solution despite different problem representations.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Theme: The Mixed City as a Planning Ideal

In contemporary urban planning, the idea of the “*dense, green and mixed*” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 7) city can be understood as reflecting what Lees (2008) describes as an almost unchallenged “gospel” for the creation of socially sustainable urban environments. Physical planning is seen in this context as a central “engine for social change”, with the capacity to break down both physical and mental barriers between city districts (Malmö stad, 2016). These are terms used by the city of Malmö as they envision these strategies of “social mix”, which in a Swedish context are often operationalised through a changed tenure structure, so-called tenure mix. This planning strategy rests on an assumed causal chain: by mixing rental housing (hyresrätt), co-operative housing (bostadsrätt) and owner-occupation (äganderätt), one is expected to attract a socio-economically mixed population, which in turn is assumed to generate increased trust, social cohesion and strengthened local networks (Bergsten & Holmqvist, 2013). While international social mix policies, particularly in the UK, the US and the Netherlands, primarily focus on the ‘deconcentration of poverty’ by intervening in disadvantaged areas (Lees et al., 2011), the Swedish approach is notably distinct as it treats segregation as a ‘relational’ phenomenon that concerns the city as a whole, rather than isolated ‘troubled’ areas or neighbourhoods. This justifies a balanced planning strategy, that targets both high- and low-socio-economic neighbourhoods in an attempt to rebalance the social relationship between different parts of the city (Bergsten & Holmqvist, 2013). This universal ambition to create socially mixed cities, including interventions in high-socio-economic neighbourhoods that may be just as socially homogeneous as disadvantaged areas, distinguishes the Swedish planning approach from the more internationally established focus on disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Bergsten & Holmqvist, 2013; Lees, 2008; Lees et al., 2012). Against this background, social mix has become a central planning ideal in Swedish urban policy, shaping how segregation is understood and how planning interventions are justified.

1.2 Problematisation: The Gap Between Vision and Reality

Despite the strong political and planning belief in social mix as a solution to urban problems, a wide-ranging scholarly debate points to significant inherent contradictions. Critics such as Lees (2008) and Lees et al. (2011) argue that the rhetoric of “social mix” often functions as a euphemism for state-led gentrification. By inviting the middle-income groups into disadvantaged or low-income areas, one risks initiating processes of displacement, where the residents the policy is intended to help are in fact forced to move due to increased costs or changed local identity (Lees, 2008; Lees et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the assumption that physical proximity between different social groups automatically leads to meaningful interaction or increased social capital is questioned. Research instead points to the existence of “social tectonics” (see Section 2.3), where residents from different socio-economic classes live side by side but lead parallel lives without their social networks intertwining. The scientific problem thus lies in the tension between the planning’s normative goal of integration and the empirical reality’s risks of gentrification and social fragmentation (Lees, 2008; Lees et al., 2012).

In the city of Malmö, this tension previously described, between normative integration goals and empirical risks, takes different forms depending on its socio-economic context of the neighbourhood (Bergsten & Holmqvist, 2013). In low-income neighbourhoods, such as Holma-Kroksbäck, the tension concerns the ambition to diversify the housing stock and attract a broader socio-economic population through the introduction of the housing tenures, versus the risk of displacement by gentrification (Malmö stad, 2016; Lees et al., 2012). At the same time, in villa-oriented or higher-income neighbourhoods such as Klagshamn, the tension is about inviting more people to the area, primarily through rental housing and smaller dwellings, while there remains no guarantee that increased residential diversity will result in meaningful social interaction or integration (Malmö stad, 2025; Lees et al., 2012). This strategic duality of addressing both ends of socio-economic statuses requires a critical examination to understand how the idea of the mixed population is constructed and what consequences it can have for the city’s social sustainability (Bergsten & Holmqvist, 2013). Against this background, this thesis critically examines how segregation is represented in Malmö’s planning programmes, how social mix is operationalised as the proposed solution in contrasting socio-economic contexts, and what planning rationalities underpin these

strategies. Rather than evaluating whether social mix "works" as a planning strategy, the study focuses on how social mix is constructed as a planning solution within Malmö's urban planning discourse.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to critically examine how social mix is constructed and operationalised as a solution to segregation within Malmö's urban planning. Through a comparative analysis of the planning programmes for Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn, the study aims to examine how segregation is represented, how social mix is operationalised as a solution, and what planning rationalities underpin Malmö's planning strategies. The findings are subsequently discussed in relation to critical debates on social mix, neighbourhood effects and gentrification.

To achieve this aim, the following questions are answered:

1. *How is segregation represented in the planning programmes for Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn?*
2. *How is social mix operationalised as a solution to these different problem representations?*
3. *What planning rationalities underpin Malmö's social mix strategies?*

2. Theory

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that underpins the analysis of Malmö's social mix strategies. Its purpose is to introduce the central concepts used to analyse how segregation is represented in Malmö's planning programmes, how social mix is operationalised as a planning solution, and how these planning strategies can be critically understood. The chapter first presents the 'assumed chain relationship', which explains the dominant planning rationale linking tenure diversification to broader social outcomes. It then introduces critical perspectives on social mix through the concept of the 'unquestioned gospel', which questions the empirical assumptions underlying social mix policies and highlights their relationship to neighbourhood effects and gentrification. Finally, the chapter presents the concept of 'social tectonics', which challenges the assumption that physical proximity between different social groups necessarily leads to meaningful social interaction. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide the analytical foundation for interpreting the planning rationalities identified in the empirical analysis and for discussing their broader implications.

2.1 The Assumed Chain Relationship

In many European and North American countries, social mix policies are based on a general theoretical framework known as the "assumed chain relationship" (Bergsten & Holmqvist, 2013, p. 290). This framework serves as an analytical lens for understanding how physical planning is expected to achieve social objectives. The logic rests on the assumption that there is a chain relationship where a mixed housing tenure will bring about a mixed population, primarily a socio-economic and demographic mix, which in turn generates the goal of sustainable neighbourhood environments. The assumed chain relationship is explained as tenure mix being the policy means, which then leads to population mix being the policy outcome and lastly, sustainable neighbourhood and positive neighbourhood effects being the policy goal (Bergsten & Holmqvist, 2013). While these motivations are mostly the same for social mix policies in all countries, as in, a mixed population is assumed to create equal opportunities, stability, good role models, and access to networks to improve life chances, it is essential to distinguish the specific Swedish strategy from the general international approach

Internationally, social mix is often applied as an area-based strategy focused on “poverty deconcentration” within specific deprived neighbourhoods (Lees, 2008, pp. 2453-2454). In contrast, central to the Swedish strategy is the perception that the phenomenon is relational, which means that the solution is not only sought in individual city neighbourhoods but through a causal chain where the entire city’s housing stock should be mixed to equalise the living conditions of residents. Under this relational lens, segregation is treated as a structural condition affecting the city’s entire structure rather than isolated segregated areas.

To understand this policy mean of tenure mix in the Swedish context, is to understand the fact that segregation and segmentation are seen as closely related in Sweden. The tenure segments are often geographically separated and often lead to residential segregation. This is partly explained by the fact that there are three existing tenure forms in Sweden: rental housing (hyresrätt), co-operative housing (bostadsrätt), and owner-occupation (äganderätt), which attract different types of households. Planners and policy-makers are planning for more mixed housing as they are following this specific theoretical model to tackle housing segregation. There are several concepts trying to put light on the same problem, such as income mix, social balance, and mixed communities, which have contributed to ambiguous connotations of the concept; nevertheless, the underlying theoretical logic remains the primary tool for contemporary urban restructuring (Bergsten & Holmqvist, 2013).

2.2 An Unquestioned Gospel

Despite the widespread adoption of social mix policies in urban planning, the underlying assumptions of these strategies have increasingly been questioned within urban studies and human geography. One of the most influential critiques comes from Lees (2008) and Lees et al. (2011) who argue that the benefits of socially and functionally mixed communities have become something of an “unquestioned gospel” in policy discourse. Within this perspective, social mix is frequently presented as a self-evident solution to urban inequality and residential segregation, despite the relatively limited empirical evidence supporting the assumed causal relationship between gentrification, social mixing and increased social cohesion (Lees, 2008).

Lees (2008) highlights that the policy assumption that social mixing will increase social capital and cohesion rests on a weak evidence base. The idea that the physical proximity of different social groups will automatically lead to interaction, trust and improved

life chances, has been widely promoted in policy discourse, yet empirical research has struggled to demonstrate such outcomes in practice (Lees, 2008). Instead, the relationship between gentrification and social mix has been described as an “uneasy cohabitation”, where the intended social benefits remain uncertain. From a critical perspective, the rhetoric of social mix may also obscure underlying processes of state-led gentrification. Several scholars argue that policies promoting mixed neighbourhoods often operate by attracting more affluent residents into economically disadvantaged areas in order to stimulate investment and urban regeneration (Lees, 2008; Lees et al., 2012). In this sense, social mix may function less as a strategy to reduce inequality and more as a mechanism for restructuring urban space in ways that increase property values and economic activity.

This critique also highlights that social mix policies are rarely applied symmetrically across the urban landscape. While disadvantaged neighbourhoods are frequently targeted for diversification through the introduction of new housing types and higher-income groups, socially homogeneous affluent areas are rarely subjected to similar interventions (Lees et al., 2011). As a result, social mix may operate as a one-sided strategy where middle-income households are encouraged to move into deprived neighbourhoods to “revitalise” them, rather than addressing the structural causes of segregation across the entire city.

This tension between the normative ambitions of social mix and the critical concerns raised in the academic literature forms an important starting point for analysing how these ideas are translated into urban planning practice.

2.3 Social Tectonics

An additional theoretical perspective that challenges the assumed relationship between spatial proximity and social integration is the concept of ‘social tectonics’. The term describes situations where different social groups live in close geographical proximity but interact very little in everyday life, moving past each other like tectonic plates beneath the earth’s surface. Studies of gentrifying neighbourhoods have shown that incoming middle-income residents often express an appreciation of living in socially and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, yet maintain limited social contact with existing working-class residents. (Jackson & Butler, 2015; Lees et al., 2012).

In practice, this often leads to an ‘uneasy cohabitation’ where residents share the same neighbourhood but maintain separate patterns of everyday life (Lees, 2008; Davidson, 2011). To understand why these social distances remain despite physical proximity, scholars have drawn on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Habitus refers to the internalised dispositions, tastes and practices that individuals develop through their social background and life experiences (Davidson, 2011). These dispositions shape how people perceive the social world and influence where they feel comfortable living, socialising and interacting. As a result, residents from different social classes often maintain different lifestyles, use different forms of transport, frequent different places and hold different expectations of their neighbourhood, which contributes to the reproduction of social distance even within the same physical environment (Davidson, 2011; Lees, 2008). Consequently, the diversity of the area may therefore function more as a form of “social wallpaper”, valued as an aesthetic and symbolic feature of the neighbourhood’s image that fails to generate meaningful interaction or increase the social capital for the original residents (Jackson & Butler, 2015).

The persistence of these social boundaries can also be understood through the idea of symbolic and spatial distinction. Research on gentrification has shown that architectural styles, consumption practices and aesthetic preferences often function as markers of class identity within urban neighbourhoods. Through these everyday practices, social groups actively maintain distinctions between themselves and others, which reinforces the separation between different lifeworlds within the same urban space (Davidson, 2011).

From this perspective, the assumption that social integration can be achieved simply by bringing different social groups into physical proximity becomes problematic. The promotion of residential propinquity between social groups is often based on the expectation that spatial closeness will lead to social closeness, yet empirical studies show that such outcomes are far from guaranteed (Lees et al., 2011). Instead, neighbourhoods undergoing processes of gentrification may develop socially tectonic relations where groups coexist spatially but remain socially separated.

This theoretical perspective provides an important lens for analysing contemporary planning strategies aimed at creating socially mixed neighbourhoods. Urban planning initiatives often assume that tenure mix, new public spaces and cultural institutions will encourage interaction between residents from different backgrounds. For example, planning proposals in Malmö emphasise the creation of new public facilities such as libraries, public

squares and multifunctional buildings intended to function as meeting places for residents from different parts of the city (Malmö stad, 2016). However, from the perspective of social tectonics, such interventions do not necessarily guarantee social interaction. Even when new public spaces are created, they may instead become arenas where different social groups occupy the same space while continuing to lead largely parallel lives.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to present and justify the methodological choices that have been made to examine how “social mix” is constructed and operationalised in the city of Malmö, through its urban planning. It explains the research design, analytical strategy and methodological procedures employed to answer the research questions. To accomplish a thorough understanding of this phenomenon, this study will employ a qualitative research design with a comparative case study, complemented by descriptive quantitative data on housing tenure and other socio-economic characteristics.

By comparing planning documents from neighbourhoods with lower socio-economic status, Holma-Kroksbäck, and higher socio-economic status, Klagshamn, the aim of the study is to bring to light the ‘relational’ logic underpinning Malmö’s planning strategies. This relational perspective assumes that segregation is not an isolated problem confined to specific “problem neighbourhoods”, but instead a structural condition that affects the whole city where different groups are separated. Consequently, the analysis focuses on how planning strategies are applied across different socio-economic contexts in order to understand how social mix is operationalised as a planning solution. The primary analytical tool used will be qualitative document analysis with a critical perspective, which aims to deconstruct the assumptions and planning rationales that are embedded in official documents.

This chapter is structured into four main sections that guide the reader from the overall research design to the analytical procedure employed in the study. In the first section, the research design is presented and justifies the comparative case study and the use of descriptive quantitative data to complement the qualitative research design contextualising the two case-study neighbourhoods. The second section outlines the qualitative document analysis and its procedure, following Bowen’s (2009) framework for systematic coding and thematic categorisation. The third section introduces the ‘What’s the Problem Represented to Be?’ (WPR) approach as the primary analytical strategy for the study. The section explains how Bacchi’s (2012) framework will be used to operationalise the theoretical concepts and systematically deconstruct the planning rationales and problem representations embedded in Malmö’s urban planning documents. Finally, the chapter concludes with reflections on validity, ethical considerations and source criticism.

3.1 Research Design

This study is primarily based on a qualitative research design with a comparative case study approach that is complemented by descriptive quantitative data. This research design is selected because it aligns with the aim of the study, to critically interrogate the construction of “social mix” as a planning ideal.

The choice of using a comparative approach is central to try and understand the ‘relational’ logic of urban planning in Malmö. By mirroring and comparing the analysis of neighbourhoods with lower socio-economic statuses, Holma and Kroksbäck, against higher socio-economic statuses, Klagshamn, the study can systematically uncover whether the planning rationales are applied symmetrically across the city. Meaning that segregation is not only a problem in vulnerable neighbourhoods (utanförskapsområden) but a structural question for the whole city of Malmö. A comparative design is especially effective here as it allows for an investigation of how the “unquestioned gospel” (see Section 2.2) of social mix is operationalised in different socio-economic contexts. Specifically whether it functions as a tool for ‘poverty deconcentration’ in one neighbourhood or as a ‘demographic diversification’ in another (see Section 2.1).

In addition to descriptive quantitative data in the form of neighbourhood statistics, the study primarily employs qualitative document analysis. Instead of acting as a single analytical method, the quantitative data offer context for the qualitative analysis. The descriptive quantitative data provide a descriptive empirical baseline of the existing social mix and physical reality of the neighbourhoods. For this study the descriptive quantitative data consist of statistics of housing, tenures, population and demographics of the neighbourhoods. The qualitative document analysis, using the WPR approach (see Section 3.3), is used to interrogate the underlying meanings, ideologies and power relations that the statistics alone cannot reveal.

To conclude, this research design aims to enable a transition from abstract theories into a practical research procedure that can account for both the physical structure and the discursive planning of Malmö’s urban strategies.

3.2 Qualitative Document Analysis

The following section draws on the procedure for a qualitative document analysis, primarily drawing upon the methodological framework established by Glenn A. Bowen (2009). A

document analysis is explained as a procedure for reviewing and/or evaluating documents. The aim is to bring out the meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge, by examining and interpreting content presented. When doing a document analysis the researcher identifies and selects the relevant documents, which could be reports, protocols, policy documents, articles and other material (Bowen, 2009).

In this study, it is planning programmes (planprogram) that serve as the main empirical material. These planning programmes are strategically significant because they precede detailed plans (detaljplaner). Planning programmes function as non-binding decision-making bases as they represent the outline of the municipality's long-term intentions and visions for specific neighbourhoods, before they are established as legally bound detailed plans (Malmö stad, 2025). Consequently, they are ideal for analysing and identifying 'planning rationales', underlying assumptions and 'problem representations' (see Section 3.1) that guide urban planning. As planning programmes usually articulate goals of social sustainability and integration they provide rich sources for understanding how 'social mix' is constructed as an 'unquestioned gospel' (see Section 2.2) to solve urban segregation. Furthermore, these documents allow for a comparative analysis of the 'relational' logic of segregation and how it is operationalised in different socio-economic neighbourhoods. The aim is to reveal how the strategies of 'social mix' and 'tenure mix' differ between lower- and higher-income neighbourhoods.

The analytical process is an iterative process that combines both content analysis and thematic analysis. Following Bowen (2009), the three consecutive steps of the analysis consisted of skimming, reading and interpretation. The process of this involves 'skimming', a preliminary examination of the texts or contents, then reading, a 'thorough examination', and lastly the 'interpretation' of the content in relation to the study's research questions. The content analysis involves organising the content into categories and the thematic analysis consists of identifying patterns and themes. Thus, relevant texts, sentences and concepts were highlighted, coded and subsequently grouped into broader analytical themes (Bowen, 2009).

In practice, sections related to residential development, tenure, physical barriers, demographics and planning goals were first recognised and coded. These codes were then categorised into more general themes such as physical isolation, tenure uniformity, demographic exclusion and social and functional insufficiency through repeated readings of

the planning programmes. These themes subsequently contributed as the empirical foundation for Chapter 5's WPR analysis.

For example, if the planning programmes referred to building new housing types, the passages were coded and categorised under 'strategies' whereas social challenges, such as low employment, residential segregation or weak social cohesion, were coded as 'problem representations'.

By using this iterative process of codes and themes, the researcher aimed to maintain objectivity by representing the material fairly while remaining sensitive to subtle cues to meaning, as recommended by Bowen (2009).

In order to give contextual information on the case-study neighbourhoods, descriptive quantitative data were added to the qualitative document analysis. These data were used to place the planning programmes within their housing and socio-economic contexts, rather than serving as a distinct analytical method. For this research, descriptive neighbourhood statistics, including housing tenure and other socio-economic indicators were used alongside the document analysis to provide a broader empirical understanding of the researched areas. While the qualitative document analysis continued to be the primary analytical method, the descriptive quantitative data were used to contextualise the neighbourhoods and support the interpretation of the planning programmes.

3.3 The 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' Approach

The 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' approach, WPR, is a method for critically analysing public policies. The WPR approach is employed as a resource and/or analytical tool to systematically interrogate the empirical material, meaning that it enables the transition from abstract theories into practical research procedure. Instead of serving as a strict sequential structure that is applied uniformly to all problem representations, the six questions presented by Bacchi (2012) serve as a guiding analytical framework. Meaning, throughout the study, different questions were employed for various analytical purposes, which justifies its placement in the methodology section, instead of a theoretical framework. The WPR approach allows one to see beyond what is explicitly being stated in the planning programme and instead examine underlying assumptions, deep-seated conceptual logics and what needs to be changed. The idea of the method is that policy is not only solving problems but rather it

creates problems by how it is being formulated. Meaning that the proposals, in forms of policy, contain implicit representations of what the ‘problem’ is considered to be. Carol Bacchi, who developed the WPR approach, explains that by having this analytical approach and analysing these ‘problem representations’ it could lead to understanding the implicit, or assumptions, and power relations that run the politics (Bacchi, 2012). The method is being used for analysing policy documents, bringing light to the underpinned assumptions, how the problem is being constructed in governance, what is being left out or left unproblematic, examining the ‘problem representations’ and lastly to develop reflexivity for the researcher. Bacchi (2012) presents six questions for this analytical tool, which are as follows;

1. *“What’s the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?”*
 2. *What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?”*
 3. *How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?”*
 4. *What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?
Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?”*
 5. *What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?”*
 6. *How/where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?”*
- (Bacchi, 2012, p. 21).

An explanation for each question is given by Bacchi (2012) and how the six questions are coherent as an analytical tool; Question one, is about identifying the problem, not what one thinks is the problem but what the policy proposes as the problem. Question two, focuses on the reflection of the underlying premises. As an example, Bacchi (2012) brings up ‘community cohesion’ as a stated commitment by the government in a report, or policy, which then implies that there is a lack of this ‘community cohesion’. The lack is thus a constructed problem in itself. Question three, looks at how the problem has emerged, meaning that problem representation does not come naturally, but rather is a result of discourses or practices. Question four, is for analysing or finding what is not being problematised, what gaps or limitations are there and trying to imagine different alternatives for the problem. Question five, brings up the effects, or the consequences, of the problem representation. It helps with analysing how it shapes what can be said, how people understand themselves and how their lives are affected. Lastly question six, which is about being aware of the power

relations behind the problem representation, how it is being produced, spread and defended and by whom (Bacchi, 2012).

In this study the WPR method is applied to examine how the problem of segregation is represented in different neighbourhoods in Malmö and how ‘social mix’ is framed as a solution to the segregation. The main analytical starting point for determining the primary problem representations in each planning programme was Bacchi’s (2012) first question. The second question was then used to challenge the underlying assumptions of these representations, especially the assumption that changes to the physical environment and housing tenure can lead to more significant social change. The study of what was left unproblematised or missing from the representations, such as broader structural explanations of segregation and conflicting planning concerns, was driven by question four. The interpretation of what these representations enable, in particular how some planning interventions are presented as essential or obvious, was influenced by question number five. Since the study does not examine the historical origins, dissemination or the contestation of the identified problem representations, questions three and six were not systematically operationalised. Therefore, rather than being a six-step structure that is implemented systematically to every case, WPR is primarily utilised as an analytical framing tool.

3.4 Validity, Ethics and Source Criticism

3.4.1 Validity

This study seeks to strengthen the validity of its findings through transparency, a systematic analytical process and the use of complementary empirical material. The analytical process has been described in detail for the reader to follow how the empirical material was chosen, coded and evaluated. By clearly outlining each step of the document analysis and the application of Bacchi’s (2012) WPR framework, the study aims to make the interpretation process transparent and replicable.

By placing the planning programmes within the socio-economic and housing characteristics of the two neighbourhoods, the descriptive quantitative data offer contextual support for the qualitative document analysis. While the statistical material provides contextual information regarding housing tenure, demographics and socio-economic characteristics of the neighbourhoods, the planning programmes reveal how the conditions are, or, could be interpreted and translated into the planning strategies. The study’s ability to

compare the planning discourse with socio-economic context in which it is produced is made possible by the combination of these different sources.

The study does not aim to establish causal connections or provide conclusions that are broadly applicable because it is based on an interpretive methodology. Rather, the aim is to provide a comprehensive knowledge of how Malmö's planning discourse produces social mix. As a result, the findings should be interpreted as analytically rather than statistically generalisable, providing theoretical insights that might potentially be applicable to comparable planning situations.

3.4.2 Ethical Considerations

This study is exclusively based on publicly available planning documents and official statistical material. As a result, no personal data, interviews or observations involving human participants have been collected, also meaning that no ethical approval has been required.

Nevertheless, ethical considerations are still important and remain relevant while conducting qualitative research. The planning programmes have been carefully interpreted and portrayed as correctly as possible throughout the analytical process. The aim has been to critically examine the planning rationalities embedded in the policy documents themselves rather than evaluate the intentions of the specific planners or decision-makers. In order to prevent misinterpretation, all quotations have been presented in their original context.

3.4.3 Source Criticism

The city of Malmö's municipal planning programmes serve as the main source of empirical material. These sources, which are official policy documents, offer insightful information about how planning goals, priorities and suggested interventions are developed. They are therefore well suited for analysing problem representations and planning rationalities.

Planning programmes, however, should not be interpreted as neutral depictions of urban reality. Instead, they are institutional and political documents that represent a specific urban development perspective. Rather than offering unbiased descriptions of social conditions, their purpose is to support planning interventions.

The period of time and the difference between the two planning programmes is a further limitation. The planning programme of Klagshamn was adopted in 2025, the Holma-Kroksbäck planning programme was adopted in 2016. Meaning that the documents were created in relatively different planning and political settings. However, this discrepancy

is not regarded as undermining the analysis because the aim of this study is to examine planning rationalities rather than policy outcomes.

Previous studies and research on social mix, neighbourhood effects and gentrification, together with descriptive statistical data, have been added to the planning documents to strengthen the study's credibility. These complementary sources reduce the study's dependence on the representations found in the planning programmes and offer contextual support for the analysis.

4. Case Study Context

This chapter introduces the two case studies examined in the thesis: Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn. Its purpose is to provide the empirical context necessary for understanding the subsequent WPR analysis. The chapter presents the historical development, socio-economic characteristics and planning visions of each neighbourhood, thereby establishing the contextual background for the comparative analysis in Chapter 5.

4.1 Introduction to Holma-Kroksbäck

Holma and Kroksbäck are two neighbourhoods, next to each other, in the city of Malmö's district Hyllie and will hereafter collectively be referred to as "Holma-Kroksbäck". Both neighbourhoods are two prominent 'Million Programme' housing estates with Kroksbäck established in 1965 as one of the first large-scale industrial housing projects in Malmö, while Holma was completed later, between 1971-1972 (Malmö stad, 2016). The 'Million Programme' was a housing and construction policy pursued during the period of 1964-75 when Sweden had a general lack of housing and there were many, up to 400 000, in the housing queue. The aim of the programme was to build one million homes in ten years (Jörnmark, n.d.). Both neighbourhoods are characterised by a rectangular grid of three- to eight-storey buildings surrounded by large car-free green spaces. Most of the 'Million Programme' neighbourhoods are often similar, like in Holma-Kroksbäck a defining physical feature is the strict separation of traffic, where the roads are sunken and pedestrian bridges are common to keep cars and people apart. Neighbourhoods, built during that era, are historically often isolated by major traffic arteries that function as physical barriers to the rest and surrounding urban fabric, and this can also be seen in Holma-Kroksbäck (Malmö stad, 2016).

The socio-economic profile and demographic, from the time of when this planning programme was presented in 2016, reveals that Holma-Kroksbäck are socio-economically disadvantaged compared to the rest of Malmö. The neighbourhoods have a young population, with 37% of the population being under the age of 25, compared to the rest of the city average of 28%, as of 2016. Approximately 70% of the inhabitants also have a foreign background, with either being born abroad or having both parents born abroad, which is significantly higher than the average of Malmö, 42%. In 2016, Holma was home to approximately 3000 residents, while the portion of Kroksbäck that is included in the planning area had a

population of around 3800. Both Holma and Kroksbäck also have economic challenges, specifically when it comes to the employment statistics. In Holma, the employment rate for residents between the ages 20-64, as of 2016, was 39.4% and for Kroksbäck it was 53.7%, both falling below the average of the city, 64%. Furthermore, education and school results in the area are lower than the average, with only having around half of the students at Kroksbäcksskolan, the local school in Kroksbäck, reaching the grades required for upper secondary school, while it is around three quarters of students reaching secondary school in the rest of Malmö (Malmö stad, 2016).

The main socio-economic and physical characteristics identified in the planning programme are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Existing Characteristics and Planning Challenges in Holma-Kroksbäck

Existing Characteristics	Planning Interpretations
Predominantly rental housing	Limited tenure diversity
Uniform housing stock	Residential segregation
Few workplaces and services	Weak local economic base
Physical barriers surrounding the area	Spatial isolation
High unemployment	Socio-economic disadvantage
Lower school performance	Social vulnerability
High concentration of disadvantaged residents	Need for a greater social mix

Source: Author's synthesis based on Malmö stad (2016)

The housing stock and tenure structure is a main focus in the planning vision for the neighbourhoods. Holma and Kroksbäck are very similar, in size, type and tenure, which is rental apartments. It is the municipal housing company, MKB, that manages and owns around two-thirds of the housing units in the area. In the current planning documents it is the lack of this tenure diversity that has been identified as the primary driver of the residential segregation.

Against this background, the planning programme proposes a comprehensive strategy of physical redevelopment aimed at transforming both the housing structure and the social

composition of the neighbourhoods. The main components of this strategy are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of the Planning Programme’s Redevelopment Strategy for Holma-Kroksbäck

Existing Situation	Planning Intervention	Intended Outcome
Homogeneous housing tenure	Diversified tenure forms	Social mix
Physical barriers	New streets and stronger connections	Better integration
Limited services and workplaces	Commercial premises and public facilities	Increased local vitality
Residential segregation	Physical redevelopment	Social sustainability
Concentration of socio-economic disadvantage	Attraction of new residents	More balanced population composition

Source: Author’s synthesis based on Malmö stad (2016)

The planning programme emphasises the role of physical redevelopment in addressing these issues. Specifically, the planning programme states, “*physical planning can be used as a motor for social change*”(Malmö stad, 2016, p. 3). This framing positions physical development as a key tool for achieving social transformation in the neighbourhood. The proposition is an expansion of approximately 2200 new housing units, with 1600 in Holma and 600 in Kroksbäck and the development is expected to add around 4400 new residents to the neighbourhoods.

The city aims to intensify the urban structure by introducing new housing types, particularly co-operative housing (bostadsrätter), owner-occupation (äganderätter) alongside terrace houses (radhus) to create a more “Mixed and Networking City” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 14) that can attract and maintain residents with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Besides residential development, the plan includes approximately 4000-4500 square metres for commercial services, workplaces and school and preschool facilities to stimulate the revitalisation of the local economy and increase safety through adult presence (Malmö stad, 2016).

4.2 Introduction to Klagshamn

Klagshamn is a residential area located in the outskirts of the city of Malmö, on the southwest. Historically, the neighbourhood transitioned from an agricultural community into an industrial village during the late 19th century due to the lime quarrying, and still remains as a defining landmark and site of natural value. Following the industrial era most factory infrastructure and buildings were demolished and Klagshamn entered a growth phase during the 1900s and 2000s. Today the neighbourhood is characterised as a small-scale village defined by its coastal location, an open agricultural landscape and its physical structure is dominated by detached houses, villas and owner-occupied homes (Malmö stad, 2025).

The socio-economic profile of Klagshamn is identified as a resource-rich and attractive neighbourhood, compared to the rest of Malmö. It is being presented as a primary choice for families with children seeking an owner-occupied lifestyle in a semi-rural setting. The existing demographics of the neighbourhood are relatively homogeneous with a residency of approximately 3000 inhabitants in about 1000 dwellings (Malmö stad, 2025). In comparison to Holma-Kroksbäck and the Malmö average, Klagshamn represents the more affluent end of the socio-economic spectrum, according to Malmö stad (2026) The main physical and socio-economic characteristics identified in the planning programme are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Existing Characteristics and Planning Challenges in Klagshamn

Existing Characteristics	Planning Interpretations
Predominantly owner-occupied housing (äganderätt)	Limited tenure diversity
Villa-dominated housing stock	Demographic homogeneity
Attractive residential environment	Limited accessibility for other household groups
Small-scale settlement pattern	Limited housing supply
Lack of rental housing	Restricted opportunities for young adults, seniors and separated households
Limited local centre and meeting places	Need for a more diverse urban environment
Low-density development	Underutilised contribution to Malmö's housing supply

Source: Author's synthesis based on Malmö stad (2025)

The main focuses of the planning visions for Klagshamn are the housing stock and tenure for their future development. Currently, the housing stock is very uniform, consisting almost exclusively of villas and owner-occupation (äganderätt). In the current planning programme, this lack of diversity in housing stock and tenure is described as a limitation that prevents a broader demographic from moving to the neighbourhood.

Against this background, the planning programme proposes an extensive residential expansion aimed at broadening both the housing supply and the demographic composition of Klagshamn. The main components of this strategy are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of the Planning Programme’s Redevelopment Strategy for Klagshamn

Existing Situation	Planning Intervention	Intended Outcome
Homogeneous housing stock	Diversified tenure types	Social mix
Dominance of owner-occupied housing	Introduction of rental apartments	Greater tenure diversity
Limited housing supply	Approximately 1350 new dwellings	Broader housing opportunities
Demographic homogeneity	Housing for different life stages	More diverse population composition
Low-density development	Residential expansion and densification	Stronger contribution to Malmö’s housing supply

Source: Author’s synthesis based on Malmö stad (2025)

“A Klagshamn for more” (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 26), serves as one of the planning programme’s guiding visions as they aim to expand the neighbourhood with approximately 1350 new homes. In this high-income context, the city proposes the introduction of a variety of housing types and tenures, specifically rental apartments and smaller housing units. It is stated that 75%, of the planning area used for residential development, will be used for 1-2.5 storeys, consisting of villas, semi-detached houses (parhus), terrace houses (radhus), apartment buildings (flerbostadshus) and freehold plots (fribyggartomter), plots for individual house construction. The rest of the area, 25%, is suggested to consist of multi-family apartment buildings, with 3.5-5 storeys where parts of them consist of rental apartments.

The intention of this strategy and planning programme is to invite a more diverse population, such as young adults and seniors, and by that use housing diversification as a

planning strategy to create a more integrated urban environment across the city (Malmö stad, 2025).

5. Problem Representations (WPR-Analysis)

This chapter presents the empirical WPR analysis of Malmö's planning programmes for Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn. Following Bacchi's (2012) first analytical question, "What's the 'problem' represented to be?", the chapter identifies the dominant problem representations produced within each planning programme before comparing them in a final synthesis. The analysis focuses on how segregation is constructed differently across the two neighbourhoods and how these representations justify different planning interventions while reflecting a broader relational logic.

As outlined in Section 3.3, the WPR approach begins from the premise that policies and policy proposals do not simply respond to pre-existing problems. Rather, they actively produce particular representations of "problems" through the solutions and interventions they propose.

Accordingly, Bacchi's (2012, p. 21) first analytical question serves as the primary entry point of the analysis, rather than the only WPR question applied. Question two is used to analyse the underlying assumptions of the dominant problem representations once they have been identified, while question four focuses on silences and unproblematised issues. In order to examine how these representations favour some planning responses over others, question five is employed more interpretively. By identifying these problem representations, the analysis examines the underlying planning rationales and the relational logic that justify different planning strategies and interventions across the city. This implies that segregation is not treated as an issue isolated to specific neighbourhoods that are labelled as 'problem areas', but instead as a relational phenomenon that is embedded in the city of Malmö as a whole.

This analytical focus is essential for understanding why "social mix" is positioned as an unquestioned solution (see Section 2.2), regardless of whether the neighbourhood is characterised by disadvantage or affluence. The identified problem representations are grounded in the systematic coding and thematic analysis of the planning documents (see Section 3.2), highlighting how recurring strategies and concepts within Malmö's planning discourse produce particular understandings of segregation and urban development and the role of social mix within the city's planning strategies.

5.1 Problem Representations in Holma-Kroksbäck

The material for this analysis will primarily be based on the planning document *Planprogram för Holma och Kroksbäck i Hyllie i Malmö* - PP 6045 (Malmö stad, 2016) approved by the city of Malmö in 2016. Through a systematic examination of the document, this study identifies three dominant representations through which the ‘problem’ of segregation is produced: physical isolation, tenure uniformity and social and functional insufficiency.

The first dominant problem representation identified in the planning programme is that of physical isolation. The planning programme repeatedly characterises Holma-Kroksbäck as “isolated enclaves” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 42). It specifically mentions “the experience of the area being an isolated enclave in the city” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 42). Even though it is mentioned that the area once was in the periphery of Malmö but is now a central part of the city, the document identifies the area’s infrastructure as one of the principal reasons for its continued isolation. The document identifies two major traffic arteries, the street Lorensborgsgatan to the west of Kroksbäck and Pildammsvägen to the east of Holma. These two major streets in Malmö are stated as “physical, mental and social barriers” (p. 15), which cut the two neighbourhoods from the surrounding urban fabric, making them, so called, “isolated enclaves” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 42). From a WPR perspective, this can be understood as the “problem”, namely the lack of spatial connectivity. By framing the traffic system as the cause of isolation, the planning programme positions “breaking barriers”, on multiple occasions, as the self-evident solution to social exclusion.

The second dominant problem representation identified in the planning programme concerns tenure uniformity. The document repeatedly frames the housing stock and the high concentration of rental apartments in the neighbourhoods as being the primary driver of ‘residential segregation’ (boendesegregation) (Malmö stad, 2016). Following Bacchi’s (2012) WPR perspective, this representation constructs the underlying “problem” as lack of the “right” type of residents, specifically homeowners and “resource-strong” individuals.

The third dominant problem representation identified in the planning programme concerns social and functional insufficiency. Here, segregation is represented through a statistical and indicator-based framing of social conditions related to employment, school results, social cohesion and local order. When the planning programme was presented in 2016, the document specifically highlighted the employment rates of Holma, 39.4%, and Kroksbäck, 53.7%, both of which were below the city average, 64%. Also, the local school results fall under the average of Malmö (Malmö stad, 2016). Following Bacchi’s (2012)

framework, this study interprets these quantitative data indicators not merely as descriptive statistics, but as elements that contribute to a problem representation. Specifically, they suggest that the neighbourhood is constructed as lacking the necessary “social capital” and the presence of middle-income groups that are associated with stability. This interpretation is supported by the document’s emphasis on the need of investing in, and strengthening, of social capital within the area (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 103). This interpretation is further supported by the document’s emphasis on low levels of social cohesion, trust and collective efficacy by describing Holma-Kroksbäck as having relatively low local order and security. It specifically states: *“areas characterised by low social cohesion, trust and control [...] also have higher levels of local problems, insecurity and exposure to crime”* (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 120). By focusing on these indicators, the planning programme represents the current population structure of Holma-Kroksbäck as socially and economically unstable. The suggestions for physical redevelopment are framed as *“driving force”* (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 26) and elsewhere in the document, as a *“motor for social change”* (see Section 4.1). Specifically the document states:

“The challenge for Holma and Kroksbäck is that physical development should be “a driving force that leads social development forward”... This means that phenomena such as safety, school results and employment rates should improve in line with the physical changes” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 26).

In relation to WPR question two, this representation reveals an underlying planning rationality based on a direct link between the physical and built environment and social outcomes, as conditions such as low employment rates, poor school results and other social challenges are expected to improve “in line with physical changes” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 26). By framing these conditions as issues, segregation is thus framed as a physical problem that could be addressed through urban planning interventions. The document constructs segregation primarily as a neighbourhood level issue rooted in the neighbourhood’s spatial form. Thus from this perspective, segregation is framed as a physical problem that can be addressed through urban planning redevelopment rather than being understood as a phenomenon that depends on broader social structures, such as the economy, class, the labour market or the educational system. As a result, from the standpoint of WPR question four, these more broad structural explanations represent a significant silence because the planning programme mostly ignores them.

As discussed in the theory section (see Section 2.2), this logic reflects what Lees (2008) identified as an ‘unquestioned gospel’ of ‘social mix’. In the Holma-Kroksbäck context, the “gospel” is expressed through the assumption that “breaking barriers” and diversifying tenures are self-evidently beneficial interventions that need no further evidence-based justification. As illustrated above, where physical redevelopment is framed as “driving force” and a “motor for social change” this study interprets the planning programme as producing a representation of the current neighbourhood as socially and spatially insufficient. Because unemployment, poor school results and residential segregation are represented as deficiencies, the introduction of new housing types and tenures becomes necessary. As Lees et al. (2011) argue, these strategies of ‘social mix’ are often taken for granted and function like a “medicine” for deeper exclusionary forces, such as class inequalities, labour market structures and educational disparities. This aligns with what Bergsten and Holmqvist (2013) describe as the ‘assumed chain relationship’ (see Section 2.1) where diversification is automatically expected to produce social transformation among the residents (Bergsten & Holmqvist, 2013).

5.2 Problem Representations in Klagshamn

The material for this analysis will primarily be based on the planning document *Planprogram Klagshamn 6055* (Malmö stad, 2025) approved by the city of Malmö in 2025. Through a systematic examination of the document, this study identifies three dominant representations through which the “problem” of segregation is produced within an affluent neighbourhood context: housing stock uniformity, demographic exclusion and an imbalance in the city’s housing supply.

The representation of housing stock uniformity is a dominant theme in the planning programme of Klagshamn where it is presented as a limitation of its current physical structure. As mentioned earlier (see Section 4.2), the document states: “Today, Klagshamn is primarily a first choice for families with young children who are buying their first ground-oriented home” (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 26). The planning programme presents “*Appealing and skewed*” (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 27), as one of its guiding planning principles. The document emphasises the need for “variation”, “angled streets” and “unique character” planning strategies intended to create “curiosity” and provide “a unique character” for Klagshamn (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 27). From a WPR (Bacchi, 2012) perspective this represents the existing straight lines and uniform housing structure as overly rigid.

Furthermore, the document presents the current housing structure as limiting Klagshamn's capacity to support the neighbourhood's local services and functions. It specifically highlights the absence of "meeting places", a clear town centre and the limited availability of commercial services and retail, within the neighbourhood (Malmö stad, 2025, pp. 81-84). From a WPR (Bacchi, 2012) perspective, this implies that the current low-density and villa-dominated structure is represented as insufficient to sustain a more diverse urban environment. In this representation, the "problem" is constructed not as a lack of attractiveness or quality, since Klagshamn is recognised as an attractive neighbourhood, but rather as a form of demographic and socio-spatial homogeneity. The planning programme represents spatial homogeneity and limited housing diversity as an obstacle to demographic diversification and urban development. In this context, the proposed addition of 1350 new homes becomes positioned as a necessary intervention for broadening the housing supply and attracting a broader range of residents.

Closely linked to the representation of housing uniformity is what this study identifies as demographic exclusion. As previously mentioned, one of the core values for Klagshamn is "*A Klagshamn for more*" (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 26) (see Section 4.2). The planning programme frames the neighbourhood as an environment that is less accessible to certain social groups due to its narrow housing supply. In the context of the proposed addition of 1350 new homes, the document argues that the domination of villas in the neighbourhood limits the accessibility of other groups, such as young adults, elderly and separated households, as it states:

"This can create an environment that appeals to more groups and increases the possibility for young adults to acquire their first apartment or for separated or elderly individuals to stay when the villa is to be sold" (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 26).

From a WPR perspective (Bacchi, 2012), this representation shifts the construction of the "problem" from social and spatial insufficiency (as seen in Section 5.1) to one of exclusivity and inaccessibility. In this context, the current resident population is not represented as a "problem" to be managed. Instead, the absence of demographic diversity is represented as a central issue, requiring intervention. The document reinforces this representation by stating that the current growth of the area and the city more broadly limits the: "*...possibility of living in the locality during all stages of life*" (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 100). This can be interpreted as representing the current housing structure as lacking flexibility to accommodate residents

throughout different stages of life. Through the proposed addition of rental apartments and smaller housing units, the planning programme represents Klagshamn as demographically limited and insufficiently accessible to a broader range of residents. Therefore, following Bacchi's (2012) framework the "problem" is represented as a lack of housing flexibility for residents, whose housing needs change over time, instead of requiring them to move away from the neighbourhood. The study identifies the planning programme's approach to "social mix" as a tool for demographic diversification that broadens both the neighbourhood's demographic composition and Malmö's overall housing supply, rather than remaining as an exclusive enclave for families with children.

The final problem representation identified in the planning programme for Klagshamn is the imbalance in the city's overall housing supply. This representation shifts the analytical focus from Klagshamn itself to its functional role within Malmö as a whole. The current low-density structure of Klagshamn is constructed as the "problem" because it is represented as insufficient for contributing to the municipality's growing housing needs (Malmö stad, 2025). The document explicitly states that a gradual expansion, or development, is required to *"broaden Malmö's housing supply and accommodate population growth"* (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 100). By framing the expansion in Klagshamn as a necessity for the entire city, the planning programme represents Klagshamn as an underutilised spatial resource within the city. This necessity for expansion and broadening the housing supply is further emphasised by the fact that the document frames the need for new housing as sufficiently important that it is justified for the use of high-quality agricultural land, which the document also has described as a very negative consequence. Despite being described as a very negative consequence, the document justifies the expansion by labelling it as a *"significant public interest"* (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 99).

From a WPR perspective, this representation constructs the current state of Klagshamn as a spatial obstacle to the municipality's objectives and as an underutilised spatial resource for achieving broader housing and integration objectives. In direct relation to WPR question four, this labelling of "significant public interest" can be interpreted as producing notable silences by positioning new houses, densification and "social mix" while positioning ecological considerations as secondary to housing expansion objectives. Therefore, other concerns, such as the permanent loss of high-quality agricultural land, become positioned as secondary consequences rather than central policy "problems". By focusing strictly on housing volume, as the primary problem representation, the policy document can be

interpreted as marginalising definitions of sustainability that prioritise ecological preservation over urban growth.

5.3 Synthesis: A Relational Comparison of Problem Representation

By synthesising the problem representations identified in the planning programmes of Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn, the study finds a clear relational logic in Malmö's urban planning discourse. While the two neighbourhoods are characterised by vastly different socio-economic conditions, the analysis reveals that the city of Malmö utilises a shared set of strategies in the two neighbourhoods. Primarily the study finds that "social mix" and physical densification are consistently positioned as solutions to what are constructed as different "problems".

One clear comparison is the contrasting problem constructions. In Holma-Kroksbäck, the "problem" is produced through a discourse of social and functional insufficiency. The neighbourhood is represented as an "isolated enclave" (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 42) and a space of instability due to its low employment rate and lack of resource strong individuals. In the affluent context of Klagshamn, conversely, the "problem" is not represented as a lack of quality or resource, but rather its exclusive homogeneity limited demographic diversity. Here, the current structure is constructed as a limitation and a spatial obstacle because it is too uniform to support demographic diversity or the city's overall growth targets.

Interestingly, one would think that by being on different ends of the socio-economic spectrum, having different demographics and difference in physical environment it would lead to different solutions. Yet, despite the different ways the "problems" are framed, "social mix" is positioned as the self-evident and "unquestioned" solution in both cases as the universal solution. In Holma-Kroksbäck the mix is represented as a "medicine" (Lees et al., 2012, p. 12) as the intended solution for residential segregation by introducing homeowners to balance out the low-income groups. While in Klagshamn, the same solution is applied to ensure demographic diversification and maintain residents throughout "*all stages of life*" (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 100). This highlights what this study identifies as the 'assumed chain relationship' (see Section 2.1), where the planning documents presume that physical changes in tenure forms will automatically trigger social transformation and urban sustainability, regardless of whether the neighbourhood is affluent or disadvantaged. These problem representations have the consequence of presenting housing and tenure diversification as the

logical and essential planning response in relation to WPR question five, while alternative explanations of segregation and possible solutions are given less consideration.

The last comparison concerns how both neighbourhoods are positioned relationally within Malmö's urban structure. The WPR analysis demonstrates that segregation in Malmö is not contemplated as an issue to "problem areas" but as a relational failure of the entire urban structure. Meaning that the planning programmes position both disadvantaged and affluent neighbourhoods as contributing to the city's overall pattern of segregation rather than attributing segregation to a specific type of neighbourhood, albeit in different ways. The planning programme represents Holma-Kroksbäck as socially and spatially insufficient by being isolated from the urban fabric, while they represent Klagshamn as an underutilised spatial resource that does not contribute its share to the municipality's growing housing needs. By labelling the expansion of Klagshamn as a "significant public interest" (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 99), the city reinforces the idea that every part of the city is expected to contribute to the relational balance of the urban structure and physical diversification.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the planning programmes do not build up segregation as a problem focused on disadvantaged neighbourhoods, but rather as a relational imbalance within Malmö's urban structure. Although Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn differ considerably in their problem representations, both planning programmes arrive at the same overall planning solution: the diversification of housing tenure and population composition. Social mix is operationalised, in this sense, not as one strategy among several strategies but as the primary planning tool for addressing segregation, regardless of the local context.

This finding, from a WPR perspective, is particularly important since it demonstrates how different representations of "the problem" can yet support remarkably similar policy solutions. Whether segregation is, as mentioned earlier, social insufficiency, demographic exclusivity or an imbalance in the city's overall housing supply, the proposed solution to segregation consistently centres on the physical redevelopment, housing diversification and tenure mixing. This gives the implication that even when the problem representations change, the planning rationality itself does not.

Consequently, the analysis indicates that the planning discourse in Malmö is grounded in the implicit assumption that changes to the physical environment are expected to generate broader social transformation. This finding serves as the empirical foundation for the discussion in the next chapter, which looks into the planning rationalities in relation to critical debates on social mix, neighbourhood effects and gentrification.

6. Discussion and Conclusion - The Planning Rationality of Social Mix in Malmö

The underlying logic of Malmö's urban planning rests on the premise that the physical environment can function as a *“motor for social change”* (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 3). This rationality is expressed in a strong belief that spatial interventions, such as breaking down physical barriers or changing the building structure, can directly affect social outcomes such as safety, school results and employment rates (Malmö stad, 2016). As shown in the planning programme for Holma-Kroksbäck, social phenomena are expected to *“improve in line with the physical changes”* (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 26). The findings of this study demonstrate that this assumption is not limited to one planning programme, but instead establishes a broader planning rationality that underpins Malmö's social mix strategies across different socio-economic contexts.

This planning strategy can be understood through what Bergsten and Holmqvist (2013) call the “assumed chain relationship”. The chain is based on the assumption that a changed housing mix, for example through new forms of tenure, leads to population mix, which in turn is expected to create a sustainable neighbourhood with positive neighbourhood effects. In Holma-Kroksbäck this is manifested through the goal of introducing co-operative housing (bostadsrätt) and terrace houses (radhus) to attract higher-income households and thereby “balance” the area through a more mixed population. In Klagshamn the same logic is used but in reverse, where the addition of rental apartments and smaller apartments is expected to break the exclusive homogeneity and create a *“Klagshamn for more”* through a more varied demographic (Malmö stad, 2025). According to the empirical results, the operationalisation of social mix is remarkably consistent even though segregation is represented differently in the two planning programmes. Diversification of housing tenure is anticipated to initiate broader social change in both situations. Tenure and housing diversification are thus used to operationalise social mix in both cases, but in different directions. In Holma-Kroksbäck, it is by the introduction of ownership-oriented housing, while in Klagshamn it is by the introduction of rental housing and smaller dwellings.

However, critical urban research questions this rationality and often describes “social mix” as an “unquestioned gospel” in policy practice. Lees (2008) argues that there is a weak evidence base that physical mixing of people with different socio-economic backgrounds actually leads to increased social interaction or improved life chances for lower-income

groups. Research also suggests that the central assumption underpinning many social mix policies remains uncertain. For example, Manley et al. (2011) discuss a study of Swedish neighbourhoods that found that tenure mix does not automatically produce social mix, despite decades of policies aimed at creating more mixed residential environments. Bergsten and Holmqvist (2013) argue similarly, that the effectiveness of social mix policies ultimately depends on residents' willingness to live in socially mixed environments, thus highlighting that changes in housing tenure do not necessarily translate into changes in residential patterns or social relations. Research instead shows that neighbourhoods often remain socially fragmented, despite physical proximity (Manley et al., 2011). Taken together, these studies question the causal assumptions that underpin Malmö's planning strategies and indicate that the relationship between tenure mix, population mix and social outcomes is far more complicated than what's implied within the planning programmes.

By positioning the physical environment as a solution to structural social problems, planning risks acting as a "*policy smokescreen*" (Jackson & Butler, 2015, p. 2352). Jackson and Butler (2015) use this concept to describe how physical redevelopment and urban investment can be presented as socially inclusive regeneration, while at the same time concealing class-based displacement processes associated with gentrification. Rather than directly addressing socio-economic inequalities, policies of "social mix" may legitimise the replacement of lower-income residents with more affluent groups under the rhetoric of creating more balanced and integrated communities (Jackson & Butler, 2015; Lees et al., 2012)

This critique aligns with Lees (2008) argument that social mix policies often function as a form of social engineering, built on the assumption that middle-income groups represent desirable social norms and behaviours. From this perspective, the objective becomes less about improving the life circumstances of disadvantaged residents and more about reducing concentrations of poverty through demographic restructuring. As Lees et al. (2011) argue, the language of "social mix", "mixed communities" and "diversity" can obscure the class dynamics embedded within these interventions, making gentrification appear as a socially progressive policy objective (Lees et al., 2011). Planning interventions seek to reshape the social composition through changes in the built environment, rather than directly challenging structural inequalities.

The findings of this study suggest that similar assumptions are present within Malmö's planning discourse. In both Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn, segregation is represented primarily as a spatial problem that can be addressed through physical redevelopment, housing

diversification and densification. What makes this finding particularly noteworthy is that these assumptions are applied across two neighbourhoods with fundamentally different socio-economic characteristics. In Holma-Kroksbäck, social mixing is presented as a solution to physical isolation, residential segregation and social instability. In Klagshamn, however, social mix is mobilised to address demographic exclusivity, housing uniformity and the municipality's broader housing supply objectives. Therefore, with regard to the first research question, segregation is represented differently in the two cases. In Holma-Kroksbäck, it is through physical isolation, tenure uniformity, and social and functional insufficiency. While in Klagshamn, it is through housing stock uniformity, demographic exclusion and an imbalance in the city's housing supply, as a whole. Despite these different problem representations, the proposed solution remains remarkably similar: diversification of housing tenure and population composition. This finding validates Bergsten and Holmqvist's (2013) description of the Swedish approach as relational, in which segregation is viewed as a city-wide phenomenon that requires interventions at both sides of the socio-economic spectrum, rather than exclusively only within disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, research questions whether such interventions necessarily produce the intended social outcomes. Rather than revisiting the debate on whether tenure mix produces social mix, an important concern raised by Manley et al. (2011) is that neighbourhood improvement does not necessarily translate into improved life circumstances for existing residents. As they note, neighbourhoods may improve statistically while the lives of the original residents remain unchanged, particularly if redevelopment contributes to processes of displacement or population replacement.

Therefore, this study makes a significant contribution by highlighting how the same underlying planning rationality functions in neighbourhoods with different socio-economic backgrounds. Notably, the contrast between Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn demonstrates how social mix can be mobilised within an affluent context, despite the fact that past critiques of social mix have mostly concentrated on interventions in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The study shows how significantly diverse problem representations can nevertheless result in remarkably comparable planning solutions focused on housing diversification and social mix by combining Bacchi's (2012) WPR framework with a comparative analysis of these different contrasting planning programmes.

From this perspective, the planning rationality identified in Malmö risks treating segregation as a spatial defect that can be "built away", rather than as an outcome of broader socio-economic inequalities related to income, education and labour market structures. This tendency can be observed in both case studies. In Holma-Kroksbäck, social challenges such as

unemployment, school performance and social cohesion are linked to the physical structure of the neighbourhood and addressed through redevelopment strategies. In Klagshamn, demographic exclusivity and limited housing accessibility are similarly framed as consequences of the existing housing structure and therefore addressed through housing diversification. Social mix therefore risks functioning as what Lees et al. (2011) describe as a form of “medicine” for social problems. While such interventions may alter the physical and demographic composition of neighbourhoods, they do not necessarily address the structural causes that produce inequalities in the first place. As Lees (2008) argues, this approach risks treating the symptoms of inequality rather than its underlying causes. By analysing how the planning rationalities found in this study are converted from planning programmes into comprehensive plans and implemented urban development, future research could build on these findings. Interviews with urban planners, residents and politicians may also shed more light and provide further insights on how social mix strategies are intended and perceived in everyday life and whether residents’ experiences align with the desired social outcomes.

To conclude, Malmö's planning strategies are based on four closely related planning rationalities, which address the third research question, what planning rationalities underpin the strategies of social mix. First, the assumption that social change can result from physical change. Second, a diversification of housing tenure will produce a more socially mixed population. Third, that segregation is primarily understood as a spatial phenomenon that may be addressed by planning interventions. Finally, regardless of how segregation is represented in different neighbourhoods, social mix is constructed as a universally applicable planning solution. The primary empirical contribution of this study is the identification of these planning rationalities, which provide a framework for comprehending how social mix is operationalised within Malmö’s planning discourse beyond the specific contexts of Holma-Kroksbäck and Klagshamn.

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Appendix A. Translations of Swedish Quotations

A.1 Malmö stad (2016)

English translation: “physical planning can be used as a motor for social change”

Original Swedish: “*fysisk planering kan användas som motor för sociala förändringar*”
(Malmö stad, 2016, p. 3)

English translation: “dense, green and mixed”

Original Swedish: “*tät, grön och blandad*” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 7)

English translation: “Mixed and Networking City”

Original Swedish: “*Blandad Nätverkande Stad*” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 14)

English translation: “physical, mental and social barriers”

Original Swedish: “*fysiska, mentala och sociala barriärer*” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 15)

English translation: “The challenge for Holma and Kroksbäck is that physical development should be ‘a driving force that leads social development forward’... This means that phenomena such as safety, school results and employment rates should improve in line with the physical changes”

Original Swedish: “*Utmaningen för Holma och Kroksbäck är att den fysiska utvecklingen ska vara ‘en bärande kraft som leder den sociala utvecklingen framåt’... Med det menas att företeelser som till exempel trygghet, skolresultat och sysselsättningsgrad ska förbättras i takt med de fysiska förändringarna.*” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 26)

English translation: “the experience of the area being an isolated enclave in the city”

Original Swedish: “*upplevelsen av att området är en isolerad enklav i staden*” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 42)

English translation: “areas characterised by low social cohesion, trust and control [...] also have higher levels of local problems, insecurity and exposure to crime”

Original Swedish: “*områden som karaktäriseras av låg social sammanhållning, tillit och kontroll [...] även har högre nivåer av lokala problem, otrygghet och utsatthet för brott*” (Malmö stad, 2016, p. 120)

A.2 Malmö stad (2025)

English translation: “A Klagshamn for more”

Original Swedish: “*Ett Klagshamn för fler*” (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 26)

English translation: “Today, Klagshamn is primarily a first choice for families with young children who are buying their first ground-oriented home”

Original Swedish: “*Idag är Klagshamn framförallt ett förstahandsval för småbarnsfamiljer som skaffar sitt första markboende.*” (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 26)

English translation: “This can create an environment that appeals to more groups and increases the possibility for young adults to acquire their first apartment or for separated or elderly individuals to stay when the villa is to be sold”

Original Swedish: “*Detta kan skapa en miljö som tilltalar flera grupper och ökar möjligheten för unga vuxna att skaffa sin första lägenhet eller för separerade eller äldre att bo kvar när villan ska säljas.*” (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 26)

English translation: “Appealing and skewed”

Original Swedish: “*Tilltalande och skevt*” (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 27)

English translation: “significant public interest”

Original Swedish: “*väsentligt samhällsintresse*” (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 99)

English translation: “broaden Malmö’s housing supply and accommodate population growth”

Original Swedish: “*bredda Malmös bostadsutbud och klara befolkningsutvecklingen*”

(Malmö stad, 2025, p. 100)

English translation: “...possibility of living in the locality during all stages of life”

Original Swedish: “...*möjligheten att bo i tätorten under livets alla skeden.*” (Malmö stad, 2025, p. 100)