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## From marginalized housing estate to attractive neighborhood

*Planning and implementing mixed-income transformations in the Danish non-profit housing sector*

Kjeldsen, Lasse

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# **FROM MARGINALIZED HOUSING ESTATE TO ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD**

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING MIXED-INCOME TRANSFORMATIONS  
IN THE DANISH NON-PROFIT HOUSING SECTOR

BY  
**LASSE KJELDSEN**

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2023



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HOUSING SECTOR**

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Lasse Kjeldsen



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK

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## AUTHOR CV

Lasse Kjeldsen has a master's degree in political science from Copenhagen University in Copenhagen, Denmark. He has a background as an evaluation officer and advisor on social and welfare policies. He is also Chief Advisor at the Center for Urban Regeneration and Community Development (CFBU, 'Center for Boligsocial Udvikling') in Copenhagen and a Research Affiliate with the National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities at Case-Western Reserve University. He has 15 years of experience evaluating social programs and community-building initiatives in marginalized housing estates as well as experience advising practitioners, decision-makers, and other stakeholders.

Lasse's research focuses on urban transformations in marginalized housing estates. His research interests include urban governance and urban practice on the intersection between urban development, community building, and social work. His research spans from studying planning practices and network-based urban governance and collaboration to the lived experience of residents in marginalized neighborhoods. His PhD is a collaboration between CFBU – a public knowledge center on urban regeneration and community development – and the Department of the Built Environment at Aalborg University. This PhD project is supported by the philanthropic association Realdania under Grant Number PRJ-2016-00107.





# ENGLISH SUMMARY

Over the last decades, countries across the Western world have introduced mixed-income transformation policies aimed at turning marginalized housing estates into mixed-income neighborhoods. The goal has been to reduce the negative effects of concentrated poverty, promote inclusion, and encourage interaction across socioeconomic divides. However, research has shown that these policies have often resulted in physical and cultural displacement, loss of community, and social marginalization for low-income residents.

While the Danish non-profit housing sector has historically been shielded from mixed-income transformation policies, this changed in 2018 when the Danish Parliament passed the Parallel Society Act. The policy mandates the transformation of selected housing estates into mixed neighborhoods while reducing non-profit family housing to 40 percent or less. The introduction of mixed-income transformation policies in Denmark prompts the question of whether the negative consequences observed in other contexts can be avoided in the Danish context and if transformations can be tailored to benefit both newcomers and existing low-income residents.

In this context, the dissertation examines how planning and implementation practices address marginalized communities' voices, needs, and aspirations. It aims to add to the understanding of the role that the social implications of mixed-income transformations play in the practice of planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations. The study poses the research question: *How do practitioners address urban social sustainability in the planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations?*

The study draws on two case-studies: a multiple case-study and a single case, process-tracing case-study. The case-studies draw on a variety of research methods including participant observations, qualitative interviews with professional stakeholders and residents, and document reviews.

The dissertation consists of three research papers addressing different aspects of the research question. Paper 1, written with Marie Stender, examines how urban practitioners approach mixed-income transformation as well as their perceptions of desirable outcomes, neighborhood impacts, challenges, and solutions. It applies the urban social sustainability framework to analyze these questions, focusing on equity, community cohesion, and participation. It finds that practitioners are often placed in planning dilemmas between serving investors and newcomers versus equitable outcomes for low-income tenants. In these dilemmas, existing residents tend to be deprioritized. The paper thus finds that transformations tend to focus on long-term social sustainability at the expense of short-term disadvantages to existing communities.

Paper 2, written with Mark L. Joseph, investigates the role of community involvement in mixed-income transformations. It highlights three major barriers to community participation: Reluctance of powerful stakeholders to allocate resources and share power, engagement fatigue among residents due to the complex and lengthy transformation processes, and conflicts of interest among diverse resident subgroups. The paper finds that the institutions of associational tenant democracy in the Danish non-profit housing sector may have strengthened stakeholders' commitment to community involvement and residents' capacity to sustain involvement, but nonetheless involvement was often deprioritized, and key stakeholders preferred to rely on expert-driven planning approaches. Excluding residents from the planning process tended to place them in a reactive and obstructive role with little creative potential. Furthermore, the system of associational tenant democracy itself was partially exclusive with the main challenges being the involvement of a broader section of tenants, particularly vulnerable groups, as well as residents from the private housing sector. To improve participation, the paper suggests more inclusive participatory formats and addressing power dynamics and resource constraints.

Paper 3 explores the potential of cross-sector collaboration between urban planners and community workers in mixed-income transformation projects and addresses the need to integrate physical and social aspects of redevelopment. This paper finds that collaboration was challenged by the siloed organization and lack of a clear and binding impetus for collaboration. The two groups were guided by diverging performance metrics which impeded the prioritization of collaborative efforts. Additionally, a lack of support from decision-makers, and concerns about resource allocation also hindered effective collaboration. While some collaborative structures emerged, they tended to favor planning over community work, leading to a lack of inclusivity and reciprocity. Community workers were generally dissatisfied with playing a secondary role in urban transformation processes while planners were dissatisfied with community workers' lack of ability and willingness to support the dominant transformation agenda. The paper emphasizes the importance of aligning objectives across physical and social efforts, addressing conflicts constructively, and breaking down silos between social and physical redevelopment efforts.

All in all, this dissertation finds that mixed-income transformations under the Parallel Society Act have been dominated by an urban strategic perspective which prioritizes long-term urban transformation aimed at reshaping the built environment and attracting investments while often overlooking the short-term consequences for current residents. This perspective has implications for the way key practitioners address urban social sustainability as practitioners tend to see social sustainability as a long-term outcome of neighborhood transformation and the subsequent increase in social mix. Consequently, attracting investments and newcomers is often favored over catering to existing residents, planning expertise is prioritized over community involvement and resident influence, and transformations of the built environment are prioritized over social efforts and community development.

# DANSK RESUME

I de seneste årtier har mange vestlige lande indført byudviklingspolitikker med det formål at omdanne udsatte boligområder til socialt blandede bydele med en blanding af ejerformer og funktioner. Målet er at modvirke koncentreret fattigdom, fremme socialt mix, integration og sammenhængskraft samt skabe interaktion på tværs af socioøkonomiske skel. Forskningen har imidlertid vist, at disse politikker ofte har haft negative resultater for områdernes eksisterende beboere i form af ufrivillig fraflytning, tab af tilhørsforhold og fællesskaber samt social marginalisering af lavindkomstgrupper.

Denne type af byudviklingspolitikker har ikke hidtil været anvendt i større omfang i den danske almene boligsektor. Det ændrede sig imidlertid med vedtagelsen af Parallelsamfunds aftalen i 2018. Parallelsamfunds aftalen pålægger kommuner og boligorganisationer at omdanne en række udvalgte almene boligområder således at andelen af almene familieboliger nedbringes til højst 40 procent. Indførelsen af den nye lovgivning rejser spørgsmålet om, hvorvidt de negative konsekvenser, der er observeret i andre lande, kan undgås i en dansk kontekst, og om omdannelserne kan lykkes med at tilgodese både nyttilkomne og eksisterende beboere.

I denne sammenhæng undersøger afhandlingen, hvordan planlægningen og implementeringen af omdannelserne i de udvalgte boligområder forholder sig til eksisterende beboeres behov og ønsker. Den sigter mod at bidrage til at forstå hvilken betydning omdannelsernes sociale konsekvenser har for praktikernes arbejde med at planlægge og gennemføre disse omdannelser. På denne baggrund rejser undersøgelsen spørgsmålet: Hvordan adresserer praktikerne social bæredygtighed i planlægningen og implementeringen af omdannelser af udsatte boligområder til blandede bydele? Studiet bygger på to casestudier, et *multiple case* studie og et *single case* studie med fokus på såkaldt *process-tracing*. Begge casestudier anvender forskellige forskningsmetoder, herunder deltagerobservationer, kvalitative interviews med professionelle aktører og beboere, samt dokumentanalyser.

Afhandlingen består af tre forskningsartikler, der hver behandler forskellige aspekter af forskningsspørgsmålet. Artikel 1, skrevet sammen med Marie Stender, undersøger, hvordan praktikere tilgår omdannelse, herunder deres opfattelser af de ønskede resultater, udfordringer og mulige løsninger. Den anvender begrebet 'social bæredygtighed' til at analysere og forstå disse aspekter med særligt fokus på begreberne lighed, fællesskab og deltagelse. Artiklen konkluderer, at planlægnings- og implementeringsprocesserne ofte stiller praktikere i et dilemma mellem at prioritere investorer og tilflyttere på den ene side og de eksisterende beboere på den anden. Disse dilemmaer spiller ofte ud til fordel for investorer og tilflyttere. Praktikerne anlægger således typisk et langsigtet perspektiv på social bæredygtighed på bekostning af potentielle kortsigtede ulemper for eksisterende beboere.

Artikel 2, skrevet sammen med Mark L. Joseph, undersøger betydningen af beboerinddragelse i omdannelser af udsatte boligområder inden for rammerne af Parallelsamfunds aftalen. Artiklen fremhæver tre barrierer for beboerinddragelse: Magtfulde interessenters modvilje mod at uddelegere indflydelse samt at afsætte de nødvendige ressourcer; udfordringer for beboerne i at gennemskue og engagere sig i komplekse og langvarige transformationsprocesser; samt interessekonflikter mellem forskellige beboerundergrupper. Artiklen viser, at institutionaliseringen af det beboerdemokratiske system i den danske almene boligsektor kan have styrket magtfulde aktørers forpligtelse til beboerinddragelse samt beboernes muligheder for at fastholde deres engagement gennem længere tid. Ikke desto mindre blev inddragelse af beboerne ofte nedprioriteret, da de dagsordenssættende praktikere prioriterede *top-down* planlægning og professional ekspertise over inddragelse af beboernes perspektiver. Artiklen viser også, at nogle beboere brugte det beboerdemokratiske system som en platform for at søge indflydelse, men at de ofte blev positioneret i en reaktiv og obstruerende rolle, som ikke tilbød dem konstruktive indflydelsesmuligheder. Desuden ekskluderede den beboerdemokratiske platform til dels visse grupper af beboere, herunder beboere med manglende kendskab til det beboerdemokratiske system samt beboere i den private sektor. For at styrke beboerinddragelsen, foreslår artiklen udvikling af mere inkluderende inddragelsesformater og adressering af de magtdynamikker og ressourcebegrænsninger, der hæmmer beboerinddragelsen.

Artikel 3 udforsker potentialet for tværsektorielt samarbejde mellem byplanlæggere og boligsociale medarbejdere i planlægning og implementering af omdannelserne og behovet for at integrere fysiske og sociale aspekter af byudviklingen. Artiklen viser, at samarbejdet blev udfordret af organisatoriske siloer samt fraværet af gensidige afhængigheder. De fysiske og sociale indsatser var underlagt forskellige målstyringsregimer, hvilket gjorde gevinsten ved at samarbejde uklare for aktørerne. Derudover manglede der ledelsesmæssig opbakning samt de nødvendige ressourcer til at prioritere og facilitere samarbejdet. Når samarbejdsprocesser alligevel opstod foranlediget af overlappende opgaver i planlægnings- og implementeringsprocessen, var der en tendens til favorisering af den fysiske planlægning over det boligsociale arbejde. Det medførte manglende gensidighed i samarbejdet. De boligsociale medarbejdere var generelt frustrerede over at blive tildelt en sekundær rolle i byudviklingsarbejdet mens planlæggerne var utilfredse med de boligsociale medarbejders manglende muligheder for og vilje til at bidrage til den dominerende byudviklingsagenda. Artiklen understreger vigtigheden af at mål og styringsredskaber understøtter det tværsektorielle samarbejde mellem de fysiske og sociale aspekter af omdannelsesprocesserne, og at der arbejdes konstruktivt med at nedbryde konflikter og siloer mellem sociale og fysiske indsatser.

Samlet set viser afhandlingen, at omdannelsesprojekterne var domineret af et bystrategisk perspektiv, der prioriterede den langsigtede strategiske byudvikling på bekostning af negative konsekvenser for de nuværende beboere på kortere sigt. Dette

perspektiv har konsekvenser for, hvordan de toneangivende praktikere adresserer den sociale bæredygtighed, som følgelig primært ses som et langsigtet resultat af omdannelser af det fysiske miljø og ændringer af det sociale mix i områderne. Derfor prioriteres tiltrækning af investeringer og tilflyttere ofte over at imødekomme de nuværende beboeres ønsker og behov, planlægningsekspertise prioriteres over beboerinddragelse og omdannelse af det fysiske miljø prioriteres over sociale og lokalsamfundsudviklende indsatser.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While doing a PhD is certainly a challenging, exhausting, and sometimes lonely journey, it is also a great privilege. It is a unique opportunity to immerse oneself deeply into a topic that – at least in your own opinion – is more pertinent and relevant than anything else. It also allows you to find that there are many insightful and generous people around the research and practice communities interested in the very same topic. Going into research at a late age with many years of practical experience, doing a PhD for me was like learning a new trade – both frustrating and rewarding. What has kept me motivated, committed, and hopeful throughout this process are the many brilliant people that have supported and encouraged me along the way. I owe them great thanks.

First, I extend a special thanks to the many practitioners and residents who have enabled me to do this research. Thanks to community workers, planners, managers, and decision-makers for sharing your time and knowledge and for allowing me to infringe on the important work you are doing. Thank you to the residents of Tingbjerg for letting me into your community and your homes, always making me feel welcome and always willingly sharing your experiences. This research would not have been possible without you.

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Last but not least I thank my family. My beloved wife, Moa, and my three lovely daughters, Anna, Milla, and Lærke. Thank you for sticking with me and thank you for your immense patience, care, encouragement, and support. You have been my cornerstones and have kept me sane through the most challenging times.

# PREFACE

The idea for this research project was born in 2018 when the Danish Government launched the so-called Parallel Society Act (*'parallelsamfundsaktalen'*) by issuing the report “One Denmark Without Parallel Societies” with the subtitle “No ghettos in 2030”. The policy stated that the concentration of social problems as well as the spatial concentration of ethnic minority populations in marginalized non-profit housing estates had to be addressed by transforming large-scale post-war housing estates into mixed-tenure, mixed-income neighborhoods.

The policy coincided with a growing focus on the urban strategic role of non-profit housing associations in Denmark. Non-profit housing associations were increasingly seen as contributors to the strategic development of sustainable and socially mixed cities. I had already begun exploring the implications of mixed-income transformations in Danish non-profit housing estates with the Center for Urban Regeneration and Community Development (CFBU). With the introduction of The Parallel Society Act, it became apparent that a large share of the non-profit housing sector would soon have to deal with the potentials, challenges, and pitfalls of mixed-income transformation. The topic called for a thorough deep dive.

The Center for Urban Regeneration and Community Development were willing to take on and fund the bulk of the research. Realdania was willing to contribute by supporting the research project with a generous grant, and Aalborg University provided the academic research environment. This dissertation is the result of these combined efforts.

The PhD dissertation consists of two parts. First, a collection of research papers containing the analytical findings and results of my research as well as a report targeting practitioners. The papers and report are enclosed in the appendices to this document. Second, an extensive summary that contextualizes my study within existing research, elaborates on the concepts and theories applied, and describes the research methods used. The summary culminates in a cross-cutting discussion of the combined findings of the study and a conclusion that evaluates the implications of my research. While the papers constitute the core of the dissertation, the extended summary synthesizes their findings and provides in-depth background information and reflections on the theoretical, analytical, and methodological choices made throughout the research process.





*Figure 1: Construction site (top) and newly build private rental blocks in Tingbjerg, Copenhagen, 2023 and 2022. Photos by the author.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>19</b>
1.1. Aim of the study.....	21
1.2. An interdisciplinary approach .....	22
1.3. Research questions .....	24
1.4. The structure of the dissertation .....	25
<b>Chapter 2. What is mixed-income transformation?.....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1. Defining mixed-income transformation .....	27
2.2. The Parallel Society Act as mixed-income transformation policy .....	29
2.2.1. The Danish non-profit housing sector .....	30
2.2.2. Segregation and the non-profit housing sector .....	31
2.2.3. The Parallel Society Act.....	32
<b>Chapter 3. Theory .....</b>	<b>36</b>
3.1. Urban social sustainability literature.....	36
3.1.1. The origins of the concept of urban social sustainability .....	37
3.1.2. An inherently normative concept .....	38
3.1.3. Lack of conceptual clarity .....	40
3.1.4. Operationalization .....	40
3.2. Social mix literature .....	43
3.2.1. The social implications of mixed-income transformations for residents .....	43
3.2.2. Community building in mixed-income communities .....	45
3.2.3. Community involvement in mixed-income transformation .....	46
3.3. Network governance literature .....	47
3.3.1. Defining cross-sector collaboration.....	48
3.3.2. The role of cross-sector collaboration in mixed-income transformation .....	49
3.3.3. Enablers and impediments to cross-sector collaboration .....	49
3.4. Combining the three Streams of literature .....	50
<b>Chapter 4. Research design and methodologies .....</b>	<b>54</b>
4.1. The choice of a case-study based approach.....	54
4.2. Part 1: Multiple case-study.....	57

4.2.1. Case-selection for the multiple case-study .....	58
4.2.2. Qualitative interviews with urban practitioners .....	60
4.3. Part 2: Process-tracing single case-study .....	61
4.3.1. A detour to an in-depth single case-study .....	62
4.3.2. Case-selection for process-tracing single case-study .....	63
4.3.3. Participant observations .....	64
4.3.4. Repeated qualitative interviews with practitioners.....	66
4.3.5. Qualitative interviews with residents .....	68
4.4. Considerations on positionality, research ethics, and generalizability .....	69
4.4.1. Positionality .....	69
4.4.2. Ethical considerations .....	70
4.4.3. Generalizability and limitations .....	72
<b>Chapter 5. Summary of papers.....</b>	<b>75</b>
5.1. paper 1: Bringing social sustainability into the mix: framing planning dilemmas in mixed-tenure regeneration .....	75
5.2. Paper 2: Community involvement in mixed-income transformation in Copenhagen, Denmark.....	77
5.3. Paper 3: What’s community got to do with it? (De)coupling urban planning and community work in mixed-income transformation .....	78
<b>Chapter 6. Concluding discussion .....</b>	<b>81</b>
6.1. An urban strategic perspective on social sustainability .....	82
6.2. Framing transformation objectives.....	84
6.3. Promoting social equity.....	86
6.4. Community involvement and the marginalization of resident influence .....	88
6.5. Addressing community cohesion through cross-sector collaboration .....	90
6.6. Conclusion .....	92
6.6.1. Contribution .....	95
6.6.2. Recommendations .....	97
<b>References.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>110</b>

# COLLECTION OF PAPERS

1. Lasse Kjeldsen & Marie Stender (2022). Bringing social sustainability into the mix: framing planning dilemmas in mixed-tenure regeneration, *Building Research & Information*, 50:7, 709-721, [DOI: 10.1080/09613218.2022.2081120](https://doi.org/10.1080/09613218.2022.2081120)
2. Lasse Kjeldsen & Mark L. Joseph (2023). Community involvement in mixed-income regeneration in Copenhagen, Denmark. Re-submitted after review to *Journal of Urban Affairs*.
3. Lasse Kjeldsen (2023). What's community got to do with it? Re-submitted after review to *Nordic Journal of Urban Studies*.

# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Large-scale social<sup>1</sup> housing estates were developed across Western Europe in the post-war era in response to housing shortages and poor living conditions for the working classes in the inner cities. They were intended to provide healthy and attractive living environments for working class families offering plenty of light and fresh air, access to green spaces, and modern apartments in rationally planned living environments (Bech-Danielsen, 2022).

In the decades that followed, however, many working-class families left the social housing sector as increasing wealth and sinking costs of construction allowed them to buy single-family homes in the rapidly expanding suburbs. In their place, a new type of tenants moved in, i.e., low-income families, social welfare clients, and newly arrived immigrants coming to western countries as either work force or fleeing from conflicts or persecution (Andersen, 2019). Over time, some post-war housing estates drifted into a spiral of white flight and white avoidance which led to an increasing concentration of ethnic minority residents, increasingly concentrated poverty, and in some estates, a concentration of social problems including unemployment, crime and safety issues, low educational attainment and the consequential challenges for local welfare institutions and services (Andersen, 2002; 2019).

In many countries, policies have been introduced to combat the concentration of poverty and social problems in marginalized social housing estates. Most radically, policies have been introduced to demolish or fundamentally transform marginalized social housing estates into mixed-income neighborhoods. These types of “mixed-income transformation” policies have been introduced since the early 1990s in countries such as the U.S., Canada, France, the Netherlands, the UK, and Australia (Arbaci & Rae, 2013; Arthurson, 2010; August, 2014a; Bridge et al., 2012; Carpenter, 2019; Tersteeg & Pinkster, 2016; Vale, 2019).

The idea behind mixed-income transformation policies is to avoid what has been termed the “neighborhood effects” of living with concentrated poverty in marginalized neighborhoods, i.e., the idea that peoples’ behavior and life-chances are negatively affected from living in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage (Christensen, 2015). In addition to avoiding neighborhood effects, mixed-income transformations have also been promoted on the grounds of advancing the inclusion of minority and low-income groups in mainstream society (Joseph et al., 2007; Lucio

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<sup>1</sup> Social housing is sometimes termed “public housing” (in the US) or “council housing” (in the UK). In Denmark, social housing is best described as “non-profit housing”. I shall use the term social housing when talking about social, public, or council housing in general, and the term non-profit housing when talking specifically about the Danish context.

et al., 2014). Thus, socially mixed neighborhoods are believed to foster interaction across socio-economic divides, which is in turn believed to give low-income residents access to new types of social networks and expose them to role-modeling and social learning. Furthermore, the arrival of higher-income residents is believed to contribute to a stronger level of civil organization in the neighborhood and to help attract more private and public investment for the benefit of the neighborhood as a whole (Arthurson, 2010; Chaskin & Joseph, 2013).

Numerous studies have questioned the benefits of mixed-income transformation for low-income residents (Arthurson et al., 2015a; August, 2014a; Bridge et al., 2012; Chaskin & Joseph, 2015; Hyra, 2015). Specifically, mixed-income transformations have been found to lead to physical and cultural displacement, loss of community and sense of belonging, as well as social marginalization of low-income residents. Social interaction across socio-economic and tenure divides has, according to most studies, rarely evolved past the bare minimum. Meanwhile, social housing tenants have found themselves exposed to draconic control regimes from authorities and landowners, while the anticipated benefits in terms of employment opportunities, income-growth, or improved life-chances have generally failed to appear (Arthurson et al., 2015a; Bucerius et al., 2017; Chaskin & Joseph, 2011; Davidson, 2008; Lees, 2008; Lel  vri  r, 2013; Thurber et al., 2018).

Though Denmark, like other Western countries, has struggled with concentrated disadvantage in some housing estates, the Danish non-profit housing sector (the Danish equivalent to social housing) has historically been shielded from mixed-income transformation policies. Instead, concentrated disadvantage has been addressed by refurbishing estates, maintaining a high-quality of housing, and through various place-based social programs – the most notable of which are “community work programs” which are a type of place-based social and community development programs that are co-funded and co-implemented by non-profit housing associations and local authorities (Andersen et al., 2014).

This refrainment from mixed-income transformation policies ended when the Danish Parliament passed the so-called Parallel Society Act (in Danish: *‘Parallelsamfundsaktalen’*) in 2018. The Parallel Society Act is a mandatory redevelopment policy that targets selected housing estates for mandatory transformation in order to reduce the share of non-profit family housing<sup>2</sup> to a maximum of 40 pct. (Kajita et al., 2022). The legislation aims to prevent parallel societies and alleged “holes in the map of Denmark” (Regeringen, 2018b, p. 5) by transforming estates into mixed neighborhoods and integrating them into mainstream society. The legislation applies a ministerial shortlist of the most marginalized non-

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<sup>2</sup> Non-profit housing in Denmark is divided into three categories: Youth housing (5.5 pct. of all non-profit housing), Family housing (88 pct. of all non-profit housing), and Senior housing (6.5 pct. of all non-profit housing) (www.bl.dk).

profit housing estates to select estates for transformation. When slated for transformation, the housing associations and local authorities responsible for the estate are required to produce a transformation plan demonstrating how the share of non-profit family housing is going to be reduced. The first estates submitted transformation plans in 2019 with a deadline for full implementation of the plans set for 2030.

Being a relatively new concept in the Danish non-profit housing context, the introduction of mixed-income housing policies arguably calls for reflection on lessons learned in other contexts where mixed-income transformations have been applied in the past. Is it possible in a Danish context to avoid the negative side-effects that mixed-income transformations have had for low-income residents in other contexts? Are Danish stakeholders and practitioners able to plan and implement transformations so they serve both newcomers and existing low-income residents thus delivering the social and spatial integration that the policy suggests?

## 1.1. AIM OF THE STUDY

This study addresses the planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations in the Danish non-profit housing sector under the Parallel Society Act. Within this context, the study aims to contribute both to the research literature and practice.

First, the study aims to contribute to the research literature on social mix and mixed-income transformation. Keeping in mind the previous research has warned against potential negative side-effects of mixed-income transformation for existing low-income residents, this study aims to add to the understanding of the role that social implications of mixed-income transformations play for the practice of planning and implementing mixed-income transformations. *What are the factors that respectively promote and impede practitioners catering to low-income residents in mixed-income planning and implementation?*

Second, the study aims to contribute to the practice field of mixed-income transformation planning and implementation. It aims to do so by examining how planning and implementation practice could potentially become more responsive to marginalized communities' voices, needs, and aspirations. Thus, the dissertation aims to contribute to identifying ways forward for mixed-income transformation planning and implementation.

The aim of the study has implications for the research focus in two ways. First, the study does not focus on the *outcomes* or *effects* of mixed-income transformations. On the contrary, it focuses on the way transformations are *planned* and *implemented* in

practice. ‘Planning’ here signifies the way design and use of urban space is devised, while ‘implementation’ signifies the process of going from plans to reality. The argument for focusing on planning and implementation is that the decisions and planning choices made during the implementation process play an important role in shaping transformation trajectories as well as transformation outcomes (Joseph et al., 2019; Lawton, 2013; Chaskin et al., 1997; Tersteeg & Pinkster, 2016).

Second, the study does not focus on mixed-income transformation *policies* but on the *practices* of urban practitioners that convert policies into actual urban transformation. Following Lawton (2013), I use the term ‘urban practitioners’ to denote stakeholders directly and practically involved in planning and/or implementing mixed-income transformations<sup>3</sup>. I focus on the practices of urban practitioners because of the significant impact they have on transformation processes. Thus, while policies certainly do shape practice, mixed-income transformation policies often leave a great deal of contextual interpretation, adaptation, and operationalization to local practitioners (Kearns et al., 2013; Vale, 2019). Studying mixed-income transformation with a focus on practitioners implies examining how they perceive and approach the transformation process, what means and instruments they choose to apply, and how they deal with the paradoxes and dilemmas they face during the process (Arthurson et al., 2015b; Chisholm et al., 2021; Lawton, 2013).

## 1.2. AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Since the focus and aim of the research project is so closely intertwined with the practice field, I have chosen a research approach that is intended to bring me closer to understanding the complexity and ‘messiness’ practitioners face in planning and implementation processes where many different perspectives and agendas interconnect. For this purpose, I have chosen an interdisciplinary research approach. This enables me to study transformation planning and implementation from different angles which contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the practices that I study (Menken & Kestra, 2016, p. 39).

Interdisciplinarity, according to Menken and Kestra (2016, p. 31), refers to the integration of, for example, concepts and theories from “two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge” in order to improve the understanding of a phenomenon beyond the scope of a single discipline. The interdisciplinarity of this study consists of bringing together three streams of literature that each contribute to the understanding of mixed-income planning and implementation: urban social

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<sup>3</sup> The term “practitioners” corresponds to Woodcraft’s (2020) term “place-making professionals”, i.e., “planners, architects, housing managers, regeneration, and community development practitioners” (Woodcraft, 2020, p. 70).



sustainability literature, social mix literature, and network governance literature. All three streams of literature are reviewed in further detail in Chapter 3. At this point, however, I find it useful to briefly state the arguments for including these particular streams of literature:

First, urban social sustainability literature is chosen because it offers an idealized conceptualization of what urban development that benefits all segments of the population looks like. Thus, I use the concept of urban social sustainability as an ideal typical representation of how mixed-income transformation could in theory benefit all involved groups while avoiding the negative social implications for low-income residents that previous studies have documented. For this purpose, I follow Polése and Stréns (2000) acclaimed definition of urban social sustainability as:

“development (...) that is compatible with harmonious evolution of civil society, fostering an environment conducive to the compatible cohabitation of culturally and socially diverse groups while at the same time encouraging social integration, with improvements in the quality of life for all segments of the population.” (Polese & Stren, 2000, p. 15f)

Furthermore, social sustainability literature provides a practice-oriented, holistic, and prescriptive conceptualization of urban redevelopment that identifies which elements in urban development processes have implications for social sustainability. This means, that the literature not only sheds light on physical planning but also on community building, participation, and other “social” aspects of neighborhood transformation (Manzi et al., 2010; Woodcraft et al., 2012). Furthermore, the literature offers guidelines and ideal-typical models through which planning and implementation practices can be assessed. Thus, I use the literature to pinpoint which elements in mixed-income transformation planning and implementation to focus on and how to assess them. The social sustainability literature is reviewed in further detail in section 3.1.

Second, I draw on social mix literature. I do so because it provides an empirical and theoretical basis for understanding how mixed-income transformations may help or harm marginalized and low-income residents (Chaskin & Joseph, 2015). Thus, social mix literature provides insights into the particular challenges and opportunities that mixed-income transformations pose. I use social mix literature to understand challenges and opportunities that practitioners face within the specific context of mixed-income transformations. Social mix literature is reviewed in further detail in section 3.2.

Third, I draw on network governance literature with a particular focus on the concept of cross-sector collaboration. I do so to be able to analyze practitioners’ work processes during transformation planning and implementation. As practitioners are distributed across a number of different organizations in different sectors, work processes play out as cross-sector collaborations (Vale, 2018; van Bortel, 2009), and

arguably, some of the challenges to planning and implementation are related to the cross-sectoral nature of these collaborations (Joseph et al., 2019). Thus, I apply network governance literature in order to understand the challenges and opportunities related to collaborative processes that cut across organizations, sectors, and vocational divides during mixed-income transformation planning and implementation. The network governance literature is reviewed in further detail in section 3.3.

The focus on these three streams of literature also implies that the study only to a limited extent draws on the traditional urban sociology literature. Thus, while there is rich literature examining the social, political, and economic processes of gentrification, marginalization, and stigmatization that drive the emergence of marginalized neighborhoods and shape the social organization and practices of the people within them (Sampson, 2012; Wacquant, 2013; Wilson, 2012), this is not the main focus of this study. Rather, this study focuses on the planning practices and the governance of urban transformation processes. For this purpose, the three streams of literature described above are deemed the most useful.

### 1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With this outline of the three streams of literature, I now turn to the research questions. In the above sections, I have briefly introduced the concept of mixed-income transformation, its introduction in the Danish non-profit housing sector, and the potentially harmful side-effects that mixed-income transformations have had in other contexts. I have outlined both the aim of the study – to contribute to understanding and developing the way mixed-income transformation planning and implementation addresses its potential social implications for the residents – and the arguments for using the three streams of literature to guide the focus of the study. With this background and in this context, the dissertation raises the question:

*How do practitioners address urban social sustainability in planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations?*

The overall research question is operationalized in three sub-questions that frame the three papers:

- *How may social sustainability as an analytical framework contribute to the understanding of the planning dilemmas embedded in mixed-income transformation?* (Paper 1)
- *What role does community involvement play in mixed-income transformations and what are the facilitators and barriers?* (Paper 2)

- *How do planners and community workers collaborate on mixed-income transformation in marginalized neighborhoods and which factors enable and impede collaboration?* (Paper 3)

## 1.4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Before I dive into the analysis of mixed-income transformations under the Danish Parallel Society Act regime, I start Chapter 2, “What is mixed-income transformation”, by explaining the concept of mixed-income transformation. Furthermore, I introduce the Danish non-profit housing sector as well as the Danish mixed-income transformation policy, i.e., the Parallel Society Act.

In Chapter 3, “Theory”, I present the three streams of literature: social sustainability literature (section 3.1), social mix literature (section 3.2), and network governance literature (section 3.3). The purpose of Chapter 3 is to present the literature and theories applied in the study which in turn allow me to analyze and discuss my findings from an interdisciplinary perspective. I conclude the chapter by summarizing the analytical focus points of the study.

In Chapter 4, “Research design and methodologies”, I present and reflect on my research design and research methods. The research design falls in two parts starting with a multiple case-study which is supplemented by an in-depth process-tracing single case-study. In this chapter, I also reflect on the limitations of the study as well as questions of research ethics.

In Chapter 5, “Summary of papers”, I provide an introduction and summary of the three papers that make up the main research contributions of this dissertation.

In Chapter 6, “Concluding discussion”, I discuss the combined findings of the three journal papers and elaborate on the main insights generated by the study. The chapter concludes by answering the research questions outlined in section 1.3, reflects on the research contribution of the study, and provides recommendations for policy and practice.



*Figure 2: The main street, Ruten, in Tingbjerg (top). Architectural model of the planned transformation exhibited in showroom on Ruten (bottom). 2022 and 2023. Photos by the author.*

## CHAPTER 2. WHAT IS MIXED-INCOME TRANSFORMATION?

The purpose of the chapter is to define some of the study's key concepts, delimit the subject matter of the study, and provide background information about the Danish non-profit housing sector and the mixed-income policy applied here, i.e., the Parallel Society Act. First, I define the concepts 'social mix' and 'mixed-income transformation'. Next, I explain the Danish non-profit housing model and introduce the Parallel Society Act as an example of a state-led mixed-income transformation policy. Finally, I explain why questions of immigration and ethnicity only play a marginal role in this study despite its significance in the Parallel Society Act.

### 2.1. DEFINING MIXED-INCOME TRANSFORMATION

Mixed-income transformation is a contested concept derived from the equally contested concept of social mix. According to Arthurson et al. (2015b), the concept of social mix first appeared in Britain in the mid-1800's with reference to utopian ideas about fellowship across social classes. Since then, the concept has been explored from many different angles (Perrin & Grant, 2014; Arthurson et al., 2015b). However, the concept still remains ambiguous both in terms of *what* should be mixed as well as *how* and on *what scale* (Alves, 2019; Bolt, 2009; Perrin & Grant, 2014; Vale & Shamsuddin, 2017). This conceptual ambiguity has led to many different conceptualizations and understandings of social mix among practitioners and scholars alike (Alves, 2019).

One debated question is, *what* we are mixing when we talk about social mix (Alves, 2019; Arthurson et al., 2015b). Often the concept is used to refer to the mix of different groups of residents (typically socio-economic groups but in some cases also cultural, ethnic, generational, or other). Yet, often a mix of housing tenures<sup>4</sup> (homeownership and private and social rental) as well as housing typologies (larger and smaller units,

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term "tenure" in this dissertation to denote both the type of ownership status (privately owner or owned by a public or non-profit housing association) and occupation status (occupied-by-owner or rental). Thus, tenure denotes both private homeownership, private rental, and social or non-profit rental (in contrast to the US literature, where tenure only refers to ownership status).

rowhouses and apartments etc.) is used as a proxy for social mixing, since variation in housing supply tends to generate a mix on other parameters<sup>5</sup> (ibid.).

Even though social mixing is oftentimes used interchangeably with tenure mixing, the relationship between tenure-mix and social mix is in practice contingent on local factors such as rent and income levels as well as social and housing policies (Alves, 2019; Camina & Wood, 2009; Levin et al. 2014). Thus, a mix of tenures may not always lead to significant social or income mixing for instance if social housing rents and market rate rents are more or less at the same level (in areas, for example, where market-rate rents are low or if social housing is expensive as is sometimes the case with new-build non-profit housing in Denmark (Noring et al., 2022)). Tightened eligibility criteria for social housing may also impede the social mix by de facto making social housing inaccessible to the most marginalized low-income groups, for example by restricting letting to people with certain levels of income, employment, clean criminal records, no prior evictions etc. (Gress et al., 2019).

This leads to the question of *how* social mixing should be achieved. Bolt (2009) identifies five main typologies of desegregation policies: Scattered site approaches, rental subsidies, housing allocation policies, housing mobility approaches, and placed-based approaches (Bolt, 2009, p. 398ff). While scattered-site social housing approaches entail that new low-income housing is established in high-income neighborhoods, rental subsidies, allocation policies, and mobility approaches aim to give low-income renters access to parts of the housing market that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. For instance, mobility approaches may entail programs where low-income renters are offered vouchers that give them access to housing options in more affluent areas (ibid.). Finally, place-based approaches signify approaches that aim to transform marginalized neighborhoods through transformation or redevelopment that provides “housing diversification” (Bolt 2009, p. 400), i.e., the introduction of a mix of housing types and tenures. In this study, I understand the Danish Parallel Society Act as a form of place-based mixed-income approach and therefore limit my focus to this type of social mix approach.

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<sup>5</sup> In theory, social mix could also be achieved without the introduction of private sector housing. For example, in a Danish housing context, it is possible to diversify the non-profit housing stock to supply various different types of units by, for example, creating bigger and more attractive (and expensive) non-profit housing units. This approach is possible due to the Danish non-profit housing model through which non-profit housing is not exclusively for people of low income but accessible to all segments of the population (Scanlon & Vestergaard, 2007). Besides housing-based approaches, there are also other ways to achieve a social mix. Integrating disadvantaged estates infrastructurally with more affluent neighborhoods or creating amenities that attract people from outside the estate may be a way of creating a social mix in public space even if different income groups may live in spatially separate communities (Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2017; 2019).

When it comes to place-based approaches, another contested issue is *on what spatial scale* social mix should occur. Specifically, should mixing take place at the level of neighborhoods, streets, blocks, buildings, or even door by door? An extensive stream of literature is devoted to questions of mixed-income housing design and layout (Brophy & Smith, 1997; Day, 2003; Levin et al., 2014; Ramzanpour & Nourtaghani, 2019; Roberts, 2007; Talen & Lee, 2018). While it is not within the scope of this study to resolve the question of spatial scale, the study follows the Parallel Society Act legislation which focuses on housing estates and neighborhoods. I therefore choose to narrow my focus to the social mix that takes place within the frame of a more or less coherent, place-based neighborhood. Drawing on DeRienzo (2012), I define a neighborhood as a cluster of housing units located with a spatial proximity sufficient to sustain a shared service infrastructure “comprising utility and transportation networks, shopping and other service hubs, education and other supportive services” (ibid.: 245). This means that in my understanding, neighborhood has a social element, as the sharing of a service infrastructure means that the residents of a neighborhood may potentially have some level of social interaction with each other and are dependent on each other to sustain shared goods and services (Frandsen, 2018, p. 42ff).

With these debates in mind, I can now define and delimit the subject matter of the study: First, I define mixed-income transformations as urban transformations that redevelop or fundamentally transform housing consisting predominantly of non-profit housing into mixed neighborhoods with a socio-economic mix of residents and a mix of different housing tenure (homeownership and private and non-profit rentals) (Alves, 2019; Fincher et al., 2014).

Second, I delimit my subject matter to mixed-income transformation projects that involve a substantial mix of different housing tenures. I do so because the introduction of mixed tenure constitutes a key element in many of the plans for transformation under the Parallel Society Act as a strategy to meet the requirements to bring the share of family social housing units down to 40 pct. Furthermore, in the Danish housing market, tenure is strongly correlated with socio-economy as well as ethnicity (Andersen, 2005). Thus, I posit that tenure mix provides a good proxy for social mix (Alves, 2019; Arthurson, 2010).

## **2.2. THE PARALLEL SOCIETY ACT AS MIXED-INCOME TRANSFORMATION POLICY**

With the concept of mixed-income transformation defined, I now turn to the Danish non-profit housing sector and the Parallel Society Act.

### 2.2.1. THE DANISH NON-PROFIT HOUSING SECTOR

The Danish non-profit housing sector accommodates about 20 percent of the population, making it one of the largest in Europe, relatively speaking (Olesen, 2023; Scanlon & Vestergaard, 2007). Non-profit housing associations establish and manage housing estates based on a balanced rent principle, ensuring that rent levels correspond to mortgage payments and operational costs. Once the mortgages are fully paid off, rent levels remain stable, and surplus rent is placed into the so-called National Building Fund. The National Building Fund is another non-profit entity, which exclusively serves the non-profit housing sector. It reinvests funds primarily in refurbishing non-profit housing properties but also supports rent-reduction programs and place-based social programs, termed “community work programs” (Andersen et al., 2014; Noring et al., 2022).

Non-profit housing is eligible to anyone despite income and is thus not reserved for the least affluent. De facto, however, the sector primarily caters to lower income groups, while other housing tenures tend to be more attractive to people from higher income brackets (Nielsen & Haagerup, 2017). Social housing assistance is nested within the sector, meaning that municipalities are allowed to allocate 25 percent of vacant dwellings for people with housing needs. Subsidies are provided on behalf of tenants who cannot afford the rent – and more than 60 percent of non-profit households receive housing allowance with allowances constituting 15-20 percent of average incomes for those households (Nielsen & Haagerup, 2017; Scanlon & Vestergaard, 2007).

Despite the sector being heavily regulated, non-profit housing associations are institutionally independent from the state. Moreover, the distinctive Danish ‘tenant democracy’ system allows tenants to have a significant say in the governance of non-profit housing estates and associations. Thus, each individual housing department (of which there can sometimes be several within one estate) has its own tenant board elected by the residents. The board is responsible for managing the estate’s affairs, including budgeting and maintenance. Housing departments also hold regular general assemblies where all tenants have the right to attend and vote on important decisions. These decisions may include matters such as setting rent levels, approving budgets, electing board members, and making significant policy decisions. Furthermore, housing associations – which often consist of multiple housing departments – have an association board as well as a committee of representatives made up of representatives from the different housing departments. These bodies are responsible for the overall management of housing association assets including sales and construction of properties (Hansen & Langergaard, 2017; Jensen, 2006; Kristjansen, 2022).



## 2.2.2. SEGREGATION AND THE NON-PROFIT HOUSING SECTOR

Throughout the 1970's, working class and lower middle-class ethnic Danes, who the non-profit housing developments were originally intended to serve, started leaving the sector and moving to owner-occupied housing in the suburbs. This was spurred by a general increase in wealth, decreasing construction costs for detached houses, improvements in transport infrastructure and the consequential expansion of the suburbs. Furthermore, the way post-war mass housing was planned, designed and constructed in the 1960s and 1970s (including the scale of the estates, the repetitive design and layout, the one-sided logic in terms of mono-tenure, mono-functionality, homogenous housing typology and appearance as well as infrastructural and urban isolation) turned out to not be attractive to the majority of the population, (Andersen et al., 2022; Bech-Danielsen & Mechlenborg, 2017). Already in the 1970's and 1980's, some housing estates began to deteriorate, and post-war non-profit housing has therefore been subject to several waves of refurbishment over the years. Combined with the shifting demand for non-profit housing, this meant that some housing estates ended up at the bottom of the housing market hierarchy (Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2019; Nielsen & Haagerup, 2017). The consequential problem with resident turnover and vacant dwellings coincided with rising immigration levels in Denmark during the 1980's and 1990's. As working-class ethnic Danes left the estates, newcomers from Turkey, Palestine, Sri Lanka, the former Yugoslavia, and Somalia moved in (Andersen et al., 2022). The result was that the estates were increasingly seen by Danes as places for immigrants which in turn led to a negative circle of white flight and white avoidance (Andersen, 2002; 2005). Thus, shifts in the housing market eventually led to a segregation spiral in the Danish housing market. According to Hans Skifter Andersen:

“Segregation is a product of structural factors in cities and of decisions taken by individual households” [looking for neighborhood qualities such as] “housing, physical and social environment, access to transport, jobs, services and natural beauties, and status and cultural identity. When these qualities are more unevenly distributed in space (...), segregation will tend to become stronger because the incentives for house hunters to choose or avoid certain urban areas will be increased” (Andersen, 2002, p. 155).

Segregation, in turn, has led to a concentration of social problems in the most marginalized non-profit housing estates. These problems have been addressed in different ways, among other things through place-based social programs. Thus, since 2006 the National Building Fund has supported ‘community work programs’ – a particular form of place-based social and community development programs co-governed and co-funded by the non-profit housing sector and municipalities (Fallov, 2010). Research on community work programs indicates that these efforts have been successful in enhancing the resources, skills, and labor market participation of individual residents (Christensen et al., 2018a; 2018b; 2018c). Nevertheless, initiatives have not fundamentally changed the socio-economic mix of residents in the

estates, partly because residents tend to move away from the estates when their social and financial situation improves (Christensen, 2013; Weatherall et al., 2016).

### 2.2.3. THE PARALLEL SOCIETY ACT

In 2018, a broad majority in the Danish Parliament adopted the so-called Parallel Society Act. The aim of the policy, according to the policy documents, was to combat "ghettos" and "parallel societies" where ethnic minority citizens live without connection to the surrounding Danish society, culture, norms, and values (Regeringen, 2018b). The Parallel Society Act contains a number of policies that aim to address these challenges, for example within the school and daycare sectors as well as the criminal system, and the regulation of eligibility and letting practices in the non-profit housing sector. In this research study, however, the main focus is on the elements of the Parallel Society Act that relate to transformations of the built environment in neighborhoods targeted by this policy (Regeringen, 2018a, pp. 2-6).

In terms of neighborhood transformations, the Parallel Society Act required municipalities and housing associations to launch redevelopment programs in a number of selected non-profit housing estates (Regeringen, 2018a; 2018b). Estates were selected via a ministerial shortlist of the most marginalized non-profit housing estates in Denmark based on a number of socio-economic statistical indicators (TBST, 2019). The list covers non-profit housing estates with 1,000 residents or more and with a share of non-western immigrants (1st and 2nd generation) of 50 pct. or above. Housing estates were placed on the list if they met two or more of the following four criteria (TBST, 2019; Kjeldsen, 2021):

1. More than 40 pct. of population (18-64 years) not employed nor in training/education (taken as an average over a 2-year period)
2. The share of residents convicted under the criminal law, drug law and/or gun law is three times or more above the national average (taken as an average over a 2-year period)
3. The share of residents (30-59 years) with no education above elementary school level is above 60 pct.
4. The average income for residents (15-64 years; excl. residents in training/education) is less than 55 pct. of the regional average.

If a non-profit housing estate remains on the list for 5 consecutive years, the estate is categorized as a "transformation area" (earlier versions of the legislation used the term "hard ghetto"). This means that the municipality and housing association(s) are required to put forward transformation plans to reduce the share of family non-profit housing units within the estate (as geographically delineated by the government) to a maximum of 40 pct (Regeringen, 2018a). This demand for de-concentration of non-

profit family housing is based on an underlying assumption that changing the mix of residents will improve the social situation within the estate and that mixed forms of ownership are necessary to be able to attract and retain more socioeconomically advantaged residents and – as socioeconomic status is correlated with ethnicity – to attract more ethnic Danes (see also Lawton, 2015).

Fifteen non-profit housing estates met these criteria in 2018 and were targeted to undergo transformation. The estates each housed between 1,500 and 8,000 residents. In most estates, half or more of the residents had an income below 55 pct. of the regional average. Between 40 and 50 pct. were neither employed nor in training/education, and 70 to 80 pct. had no education above primary school level. In most estates 60 to 80 pct. of residents were of non-western descent (TBST, 2019). The average share of family non-profit housing units was 94 percent before the introduction of the Parallel Society Act (Indenrigs- og Boligministeriet, 2021).

The housing standard in the estates was generally good, though some estates needed refurbishment. Others had recently undergone refurbishment, adding new facades, windows, kitchens, or the like. Vacancies (uninhabited dwellings) were generally not a problem in most estates (BL, 2018).

### **Transformation instruments in the Parallel Society Act**

The Parallel Society Act offered a number of instruments available to municipalities and housing associations in order to reduce the share of family social housing units to 40 pct. (Regeringen, 2018a)<sup>6</sup>. Some instruments are suitable in some estates, while others are better suited in other estates. It is up to local stakeholders to choose which instruments to apply in their local context:

- Demolition (in combination with in-fill or conversions)
- Conversions of social housing family units into youth or senior units
- Selling social housing units to private owners
- Densification with infill private housing units
- Other infill projects such as retail, office buildings or public facilities (sports facilities, libraries etc.)

In addition to regulating the mix of forms of ownership in the targeted areas, the Parallel Society Act also introduced a shift in decision-making competence in relation to the physical transformations. Traditionally the tenants' democracy – in the shape of both the local tenants' general assembly and association board – had decision-making authority in the case of redevelopment or refurbishment of non-profit housing estates. With the introduction of the Parallel Society Act, the city councils were given

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to the listed instruments, the Parallel Society Act also encourages municipalities and housing associations to implement infrastructural changes as a way of linking the targeted housing estates more closely with the surrounding cityscape (Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2019).

directive powers to enforce demolitions, sales, and conversions in the public housing departments if the housing associations were unwilling to do so. Furthermore, should city councils fail to live up to the requirements of the Parallel Society Act, the Governmental Housing and Planning Authority were – as a last resort – authorized to implement transformation without consultation and at the expense of the housing association (Regeringen, 2018a).

### **The perspective on the Parallel Society Act applied in this study**

This study focuses on the Parallel Society Act as a mixed-income transformation policy. Thus, I focus exclusively on the components of the legislation that addresses the transformation of housing estates while disregarding the components that target, for example, the education system or letting and eligibility rules. Furthermore, while immigration and ethnicity are central concepts in the Parallel Society Act, I do not directly address ethnicity in my study of mixed-income transformations. The reason is that my focus is not on the policy per se but on the way practitioners plan and implement transformations in practice. Here, ethnicity did not play a very prominent role. Where questions of ethnicity and culture were brought up in planning and implementation processes, I have addressed it in my analysis.

With the definition of the concept of mixed-income transformation provided in this chapter with the introduction of the Danish non-profit housing sector and with this short account of the contents of the Parallel Society Act, I now turn to a review of the three streams of literature applied in the study.



*Figure 3: Private rowhouses, occupied by owner (top). New private rental apartments under construction. Tingbjerg, 2022. Photos by the author.*

## CHAPTER 3. THEORY

In the previous chapters, I have presented my main research question: *How do practitioners address urban social sustainability in planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations?* Furthermore, I have briefly introduced my definition of urban social sustainability as well as my understanding of mixed-income transformations. Subsequently, I have introduced the Parallel Society Act as an example of a state-led mixed-income transformation policy.

With the delimitation of the subject matter and the research question in place, I am now ready to present the theories that I apply in the analysis and discussion of my findings. In the introduction, I have argued that an *interdisciplinary approach* is required to fully grasp the complexity and ‘messiness’ of the subject matter by illuminating transformation planning and implementation from different angles thus providing more nuanced insights (Menken & Keestra, 2016). This interdisciplinarity entails combining three streams of literature that each contribute to the understanding of particular aspects of mixed-income transformation: Urban social sustainability literature, social mix literature, and network governance literature. The purpose of this chapter is to combine key insights from these three streams of literature in order to identify the most important factors affecting social sustainability orientations in mixed-income planning and implementation (thus contributing to answering the research questions).

In this chapter, I review the three streams of literature in sections 3.1 (“Urban social sustainability literature”), 3.2 (“Social mix literature”) and 3.3 (“Network governance literature”). I then move on in section 3.4 to combine the three streams of literature to extract key insights that will in turn guide my analysis of mixed-income transformation planning and implementation: What themes and what significant factors should the analysis focus on?

### 3.1. URBAN SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY LITERATURE

In this section I review the urban social sustainability literature and extract key insights that I will in turn apply in my analyses. I choose to apply urban social sustainability literature because it offers to the analysis an ideal typical conceptualization of how urban development may take place in order to benefit all segments of the population while avoiding potential negative implications for low-income residents (Polese & Stren, 2000). Furthermore, urban social sustainability literature provides a practice-oriented, holistic, and prescriptive conceptualization of urban redevelopment that identifies what critical elements in urban development processes have implications for social sustainability (Woodcraft et al., 2012). Thus,

as Tunström (2019, p. 45) argues that the concept of urban social sustainability offers a useful perspective or “looking glass” for understanding and assessing urban development.

I start this section by introducing the origins of the concept and my definition of social sustainability. I then go on to discuss two main criticisms of the concept: normativity of the concept and lack of conceptual clarity. I argue that the normativity of the concept may be justified in the context of mixed-income transformation planning and implementation and that the lack of conceptual clarity calls for contextual operationalization. I go on to operationalize the concept in a mixed-income transformation context extracting three basic components of urban social sustainability from the literature that will serve as analytical focus points in analyses: social equity, community building, and community involvement.

### **3.1.1. THE ORIGINS OF THE CONCEPT OF URBAN SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Urban social sustainability is a concept taken from urban planning research. It describes and assesses urban development in terms of how it contributes to developing and sustaining sustainable forms of sociality (Bramley & Power, 2009; Dempsey et al., 2011; Murphy, 2012; Stender, 2018). The concept emanates from the 1987 UN Brundtland-report that first popularized the idea of the “three pillars” of sustainability, i.e., the economic, environmental, and social (Boyer et al., 2016; WCED, 1987).

The concept has gained popularity in urban planning research as increasing urbanization has led to massive growth in urban areas worldwide (McFarlane, 2020; Kjeldsen, 2021). Social sustainability literature addresses the challenges of developing urban environments into attractive and well-functioning neighborhoods (Woodcraft et al. 2012; Kjeldsen, 2021). Thus, according to Janssen et al. (2021), the increasing interest for social sustainability is related to increasing tensions and challenges in modern cities, including segregation, economic inequality, and social conflicts about urban space usage.

While many different definitions of the concept have been provided (Shirazi and Keivani (2019a, p. 10) list no less than 20 different definitions), the concept of urban social sustainability is generally understood to designate planning efforts that strive to promote well-being, quality of life, social equity, inclusion, and cohesion while serving both current and future generations (Langergaard & Dupret, 2020). As stated in Chapter 1 (“Introduction”), this dissertation applies Polèse and Stren’s definition of socially sustainable urban development from their influential book, “The Social Sustainability of Cities” (2000):

*Development (...) that is compatible with harmonious evolution of civil society, fostering an environment conducive to the compatible cohabitation of culturally and socially diverse groups while at the same time encouraging social integration, with improvements in the quality of life for all segments of the population. (Polese & Stren, 2000, p. 15f)*

I choose this definition because it stresses some key elements that are relevant when studying mixed-income transformations. Specifically, the compatible coexistence of diverse groups, social interaction, and civil society development, and the focus of social equity in terms of improvements for all segments of the population. These elements represent key challenges in mixed-income transformations – something I return to in section 3.2, “Social mix literature”.

Meanwhile, the concept of urban social sustainability has also been criticized on at least two accounts (Shirazi & Keivani, 2019b): First, for being inherently normative, and second, for lacking conceptual clarity. These two criticisms need to be addressed before applying the concept to my analyses. In the next two sections I will address these two criticisms while laying out the arguments regarding why the concept nonetheless offers a useful heuristic for this study.

### **3.1.2. AN INHERENTLY NORMATIVE CONCEPT**

First, urban social sustainability has been criticized for its inherent normativity. Shirazi and Keivani (2019a) argue, that this normativity emanates from the concept’s affiliation with the planning discipline which is itself inherently a normative enterprise devoted to searching for the improvement of urban spaces and the imaging of “better” futures (ibid.: 13). Thus, the concept has also been criticized for merely summarizing what is generally perceived as prevailing ideals of good urban development in the public sector as well as urban planning practice more broadly (Dempsey et al., 2011; Stender, 2018).

That the concept is normative entails that it claims to serve the development of “good” places to live, in other words that it claims ability to pass judgement on what is to be considered “good” and “bad” urban development (Woodcraft, 2015). While these notions vary somewhat across the literature, the notion of “social equity” generally plays a central role (Shirazi & Keivani, 2019a). Hence, Woodcraft et al. (2012), Dempsey et al. (2011), Murphy (2012), and Manzi et al. (2010) all put social equity at the center of their understanding of urban social sustainability. To Davidson (2019), this preoccupation with equity mirrors the concept’s intrinsic democratic foundation, i.e., its’ adherence to the principle of “the equality of each with all” (Davidson, 2019,



p. 38). Thus, according to Davidson, sustainable urban form of sociality must ultimately rest on democracy as “the only legitimate mode of social ordering” (ibid.).

While this is arguably a normative stance – i.e., that urban planning should serve the promotion of social equity – I will argue that the focus on equity renders the concept useful for the purpose of studying mixed-income transformations in marginalized housing estates. On the one hand, mixed-income transformations claim to serve social equity by promoting social integration and bolstering the life-chances and living conditions of people living in marginalized neighborhoods (Joseph et al., 2007). On the other hand, however, mixed-income transformations have been criticized for deepening inequality by driving gentrification while excluding and displacing low-income and marginalized residents (Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; Desmond & Shollenberger, 2015; Lees, 2008). According to Tunström (2019), social mixing may either promote or curb social sustainability depending on how it is implemented in practice. For the same reason, the concept of social sustainability has both in the literature and practice been closely linked with the development of mixed-income communities (Manzi et al., 2010, p. 37).

Tunström (2019) argues that the concept of social sustainability is particularly relevant to the challenges of marginalized neighborhoods in the Nordic welfare states. While many Nordic cities suffer from similar challenges – exclusive inner cities, marginalized neighborhoods in the urban periphery and strong ethnic segregation patterns – the ideals of urban social sustainability are at the same time central to Scandinavian urban planning practice. In Scandinavian planning practice this can be conceptualized under three themes. First, there is a strong ideal of local democracy and participatory planning by which residents and other local stakeholders are invited to take part in planning processes (see also Agger & Löfgren, 2008; Engberg & Larsen, 2010). Second, there is a focus on neighborhood as place and social network, including efforts to strengthen marginalized neighborhoods and make them more attractive. Third, there is a focus on the mixed city and mixed housing as key to sustainable urban sociality (Tunström, 2019, p. 48ff).

Following Tunström (2019), I thus argue that the concept of urban social sustainability offers a useful heuristic for the study of mixed-income transformation in Danish non-profit housing estates. It does so by pointing out the way different components of urban transformation processes may harm or help residents in the targeted estates. This, in turn, has implications for the themes and questions that I focus on in the present study. In the next section, I turn to the conceptual ambiguity of the concept and operationalize it in three sub-components that are in turn applied in my analyses.

### 3.1.3. LACK OF CONCEPTUAL CLARITY

A second critique of the concept of urban social sustainability is the lack of conceptual clarity and rigor (Langergaard, 2019; Manzi et al., 2010; Woodcraft, 2012). Shirazi and Keivani (2019a, p. 9) call this a “concept in chaos” while Davidson (2019, p. 32) describes social sustainability as an empty signifier: A concept that draws its’ meaning from the way it organizes secondary concepts and therefore changes meaning dependent on which secondary concepts it is connected with. This means that the meaning of the concept can often be “stretched” which makes it vulnerable to “social washing” where stakeholders use the concept to serve other purposes (Stender & Walter, 2019). Lack of conceptual clarity furthermore means that the consequences of the absence of social sustainability remain unclear, undertheorized, and under-researched (Davidson, 2019)<sup>7</sup>. This may be one of the reasons why – according to Vifell and Soneryd (2012) – social sustainability is often suppressed or surpassed by other agendas, including those of economic and environmental sustainability, the absence of which are perceived by stakeholders to have clearer and more comprehensible consequences.

However, as Janssen et al. (2021) argue, this lack of conceptual clarity may in fact be more of a strength than a weakness. The argument is that the concept gains its relevance by being adaptable across different contexts, as what is considered a desired and sustainable form of sociality is always contingent on local conditions. Thus, social sustainability remains useful because it is a pluralistic concept that gains its meaning in the particular situation where it is used – through the argumentative development of operationalizations and indicators by planners and policymakers in specific contexts (Jansen et al., 2021).

In accordance with this argument, this particular study also calls for an operationalization of social sustainability in order to make the concept useful for an empirical analysis. Therefore, in the next section, I go on to operationalize the concept in a Danish mixed-income transformation context.

### 3.1.4. OPERATIONALIZATION

In this section, I operationalize urban social sustainability into three underlying components. Reading across social sustainability literature, most definitions and

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<sup>7</sup> This, in turn, relates to the fact that while environmental sustainability draws its legitimacy from the natural sciences, social sustainability draws on social sciences and to an increasing degree from qualitative paradigms. Thus, the study of social sustainability is not an exact science (Shirazi & Keivani, 2019).

operationalizations of social sustainability have some overlapping elements. Though social sustainability relates to urban planning and development, many of these elements relate to non-physical factors such as social justice, participation, social interaction, safety, community, social cohesion etc. Other components relate to the physical environment, e.g., attractive public realm, accessibility, walkability etc. (Dempsey et al., 2011; Woodcraft, 2015).

For example, Eizenberg and Jabareen (2017) focus on equity, safety, urban form, and eco-prosumption (i.e., sustainable forms of production and consumption), while Manzi et al. (2010, p. 18) include neighborhood livability, resident participation and empowerment, social cohesion, welfare service provision, partnerships and collaboration, safety, access to information technology, and promoting equal opportunities for all. Langergaard (2019, p. 458) summarizes the social sustainability literature in four themes: Social equity, community, social inclusion and cohesion, and participation and local democracy. In this study, I follow Stender and Walter's conceptualization (2019) of urban social sustainability which is largely congruent with Langergaard (2019) and consists of three main components:

- a. Equity and social inclusion
- b. Community and social cohesion
- c. Participation

I do so because these three components resonate with the majority of social sustainability literature while also focusing on aspects of mixed-income transformations that have been highlighted as challenging in the research literature (Manzi et al., 2010). In the following sections, I shall briefly describe these three components.

### **Equity and inclusion**

The notion of equity and inclusion refers to the idea that everyone – regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, etc. – has the same opportunity to live a good life and fulfill their potential (Murphy, 2012). Equity in urban social sustainability literature designates the way urban development promotes equal access to the city's benefits and opportunities for all (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). Equity has both a physical and spatial dimension and a non-physical, social dimension. On the spatial dimension, equity refers to the spatial distribution of goods including the accessibility for all segments of the population to goods such as employment opportunities, quality education, decent and affordable housing, public services, shops and amenities, green spaces, clean air, access to resources such as water and energy (Darchen & Ladouceur, 2013; Dempsey et al., 2011; Pareja-Eastaway, 2012). On the other hand, inequity may manifest itself in concentrated disadvantage, neglect, and disinvestment in some urban areas (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017).

Regarding the non-physical dimension, equity refers to inclusion, non-discrimination, tolerance, and respect for social and cultural diversity (Woodcraft, 2015). Safety and the absence of crime in people's living environment is also a parameter for social equity (Dempsey et al., 2011; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). Eizenberg and Jabareen (2017) also highlight social and economic policies that limit socio-economic marginalization. Urban development, then, should contribute to the inclusion of all segments of the population in the social and economic life of the city (Bramley & Power, 2009; Murphy, 2012, p. 20; Stender, 2018).

### **Community cohesion**

Community cohesion refers to elements such as social networks, norms of reciprocity, solidarity, place identity, place attachment, and features of social organization (Murphy, 2012, p. 2). This component also has both a physical and non-physical dimension. The physical dimension includes amenities and infrastructure that support community life and social interaction such as sports and cultural facilities, playgrounds, gardens, and urban layouts that promote interaction, including interaction across diverse resident groups (Woodcraft et al., 2012; Woodcraft, 2015). The non-physical dimension includes inclusive social dynamics, social interaction, respect for social and cultural diversity, and the promotion of sense of place and belonging (Dempsey et al., 2011; Woodcraft et al., 2012).

### **Participation**

Finally, participation refers to community involvement and community voice and influence on the development of urban space (Tunström, 2019; Woodcraft, 2015). Murphy (2012, p. 3) states that sustainable urban development must build on the widest possible participation in decisions about the development of the built environment. The preoccupation with community involvement in social sustainability literature rests both on consequential and procedural arguments. From a consequential perspective, the involvement of community members in the development of their living environment provides better urban spaces while also engaging residents to take an active part in their community (Woodcraft et al., 2012). This, in turn, promotes place-attachment, sense of place, and social cohesion (Dempsey et al., 2011; Murphy, 2012; Stender & Walter, 2018).

From a procedural perspective, the importance of community involvement relates to the interconnection between social sustainability and democracy. Thus, to Davidson (2019), the only socially sustainable way forward for urban development is through adherence to democratic principles. Community involvement and participatory planning allows planners and decisionmakers to access and understand urban development from a resident's perspective. This is particularly relevant for mixed-income transformation due to the adverse effects that transformations may potentially have for marginalized and low-income residents. Thus, community involvement serves an important function in addressing social justice and equity in mixed-income transformation (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017).

### 3.2. SOCIAL MIX LITERATURE

In this section, I review the social mix literature and excerpt key insights that will feed into my analysis. I choose to apply social mix literature because it provides empirical and theoretical insights into the particular challenges and opportunities that mixed-income transformations pose, particularly in terms of the social implications for low-income residents (Chaskin & Joseph, 2015). Thus, I draw on the social mix literature to understand the challenges that practitioners face within the specific context of mixed-income transformations.

Social mix literature is a stream of literature that examines mixed-income transformations as well as the experience of living in and working with mixed-income communities seen from the perspective of residents, urban practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in mixed-income neighborhoods. The social mix literature, while sometimes applying quantitative or mixed-methods designs, is predominantly qualitative in nature. Thus, it distinguishes itself both methodologically and in terms of subject matter from the neighboring field of ‘neighborhood effects’ literature, which studies the effects that neighborhood characteristics and particularly the resident composition in a neighborhood has on individual level outcomes such as delinquency, employment, education, mental health etc. (Damm & Dustmann, 2014; Galster, 2019; Ham et al., 2011). As this study focuses on planning and implementation *processes* rather than the *effects* of mixed-income transformations, I have chosen not to include neighborhood effects literature in this study.

I start this section by reviewing the contribution of the social mix literature with the understanding of the social implications of mixed-income transformations for residents. I focus on the questions of physical and cultural displacement as well as the risks of mixed-income transformations contributing to further marginalization of low-income residents. Second, I account for the challenges relating to community building in mixed-income neighborhoods. Finally, I describe the challenges to community involvement in mixed-income transformation.

#### 3.2.1. THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF MIXED-INCOME TRANSFORMATIONS FOR RESIDENTS

In this section, I account for the social implications of mixed-income transformation for residents. Though this study focuses on mixed-income transformation planning and implementation rather than outcomes, it is important to understand the outcomes that mixed-income transformations have produced in the past, as these outcomes are

– at least in part – related to the planning and implementation practices that have led to the transformations of the build as well as social environment. To understand what challenges to focus on in terms of planning and implementation it is necessary to understand the potential pitfalls of mixed-income transformations.

While mixed-income transformations are in theory intended to improve living conditions and life-opportunities for people living in marginalized housing estates, empirical studies find that transformation outcomes are in fact mixed. On the one hand, some studies find positive effects regarding residents' satisfaction with the physical environment as well as on community stability and some residents' ability to stay in their neighborhood, e.g., due to right-to-buy schemes. The provision and quality of amenities and local services may also be improved (Bond et al., 2011; Sautkina et al., 2012). Other studies suggest that crime and safety issues have generally been improved through mixed-income transformations (August, 2014b, p. 58ff; Chaskin & Joseph, 2015) while some studies provide mixed evidence (Bond et al., 2011; Sautkina et al., 2012).

On the other hand, a range of studies suggest that mixed-income transformation may have a negative impact on the lives of residents living in marginalized housing estates. At least three types of challenges can be identified in the literature: Physical displacement, cultural displacement, and marginalization.

First, physical displacement refers to the phenomenon that mixed-income transformations may lead to a reduction in housing opportunities for low-income residents, leading to them being displaced from the estate to other low-income neighborhoods. This is partially because social housing residents are relocated during the transformation period and never return (August, 2014b; Nielsen & Jepsen, 2020) and because transformation often leads to a net-reduction in the number of social housing units due to demolitions and inadequate reestablishment of social housing units (ibid.; Vale, 2019). Furthermore, redevelopment of social housing units in transformed mixed-income neighborhoods is often followed by tightened eligibility criteria (relating to e.g., employment, income, criminal record, eviction record, or substance abuse) effectively preventing the most marginalized residents from gaining access to housing (Chaskin & Joseph, 2015). The physical displacement caused by these dynamics often leads to a reconcentration of low-income and marginalized residents into nearby social or public housing estates (Nielsen & Jepsen, 2020).

Second, in addition to physical displacement, there is also cultural displacement (Hyra, 2015). Cultural displacement refers to the notion that planning and design choices tend to cater to some segments of the population more than others and that planning choices tend to favor higher-income newcomers over existing low-income social housing tenants (Howe & Langdon, 2002). For example, in his study of Washington DC's Shaw/U Street neighborhood, Derek Hyra (2015) demonstrates how mixed-income redevelopment over time led to the displacement or disappearance

of cultural institutions and features associated with and cherished by the original Black, low-income community. Similarly, in a Danish context, Jonas Strandholdt Bach (2019a; 2019b) recounts how social housing tenants living in an estate under transformation experience the transformation as a process of removing the identity and characteristics of the place they know as their home. The consequence of cultural displacement may include a loss of community, sense of belonging, alienation, and withdrawal from community life (Thurber et al., 2018; Thurber, 2018).

Finally, social mix literature draws attention to the marginalization and disempowerment that low-income residents may experience from living in mixed-income neighborhoods. Chaskin and Joseph (2015) term this type of marginalization “incorporated exclusion,” hinting at the assertion that though low-income residents live spatially integrated with high-income groups, they are socially and economically excluded from fully participating in the community. The social mix literature demonstrates how the use of market mechanisms in mixed-income transformations contribute to incorporated exclusion (Bridge et al., 2012; Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; Khazbak, 2021). Thus, private developers and investors will often seek to defend their investment even when this may be at the expense of their low-income neighbors. Attempts to “privatize” public space, construction of physical or symbolic boundaries between social and market rate housing or planning that favors private sector housing with more attractive locations and amenities are examples of challenges to social equity to which the introduction of market-based housing has given rise (August, 2016; Arthurson et al., 2015a; Chaskin & Joseph, 2015).

The public appearance of the neighborhood becomes important, as homeowners and investors will seek to protect their investment. Thus, littering, inadequate upkeep, loitering or even socializing in public space may be considered a threat in so far as it gives an impression of a “ghetto” (Arthurson et al., 2015a; Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; 2015; Lelévrier, 2013). This becomes manifest when powerful stakeholders set rules and regulations that disfavor low-income renters. Thus, due to new and stricter rules limiting many activities, uses of and access to space for social renters, social housing tenants have generally been shown to be under stricter surveillance and discipline by site management (Brail & Kumar, 2017; Fraser et al., 2013, p. 91; Tersteeg & Pinkster, 2016; Thurber et al., 2018).

### **3.2.2. COMMUNITY BUILDING IN MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITIES**

In this section, I account for the social mix literature’s contribution to the understanding of community building in mixed-income communities. I argue that the social mix literature shows that community-cohesion is generally challenged in mixed-income communities. This stresses the need for intentional community building efforts.

First, while one of the ideas behind mixed-income communities is that it will allow low-income residents to form networks with higher-income neighbors (Kleit & Carnegie, 2011), social mix literature generally indicates that social integration across socio-economic and tenure divides rarely live up to expectations. On the contrary, while spatially integrated, different social groups tend to remain socially segregated (August, 2016; Arthurson et al., 2015a; Bond et al., 2011, p. 81; Brail & Kumar, 2017; Chaskin & Joseph, 2010; Camina & Wood, 2009; Fraser et al., 2013; Lawton, 2015; Thurber et al., 2018). Thus, Bolt (2009) shows that the social interaction across social groups and different forms of ownership is extremely limited, as the social networks in the areas are often limited to people with more or less the same socio-economic position. Concordantly, Arthurson (2010) argues that the interaction that does occur is mainly between neighbors within more or less the same income-brackets.

Many studies suggest that mixed-income transformation may often have detrimental effects on social cohesion and community well-being (Thurber et al., 2018). Tersteeg and Pinkster (2016) describe conflicts arising because children and adolescents from families in social housing units were perceived by private sector residents to be noisy, violent, and ill-mannered when using public spaces. This in turn reflected negatively on the perception of social housing families. Along the same lines, Lel  vri  r (2013) demonstrates how conflict is created between social housing and private sector residents about the use and maintenance of common areas, as private sector residents accuse social housing tenants of wrecking parking areas and courtyards. Some studies suggest that these tensions in some cases lead to "othering" processes and stigmatization as well as persistent social tensions (Chaskin & Joseph, 2015; Hyra, 2015; Lel  vri  r, 2013; Tersteeg & Pinkster, 2016).

### **3.2.3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN MIXED-INCOME TRANSFORMATION**

In this section, I will outline what the social mix literature says about the facilitators and impediments to participation and community involvement in mixed-income transformations. Community involvement, as stated in section 3.1 ("Urban social sustainability literature") is important because it makes divergent perspectives and conflicts over planning issues more transparent. However, community involvement in mixed-income transformation is challenged on two fronts. First, by the power-asymmetry between professional stakeholders and residents; and second, by the diverging interests and fragmentation between different groups of residents.

First, social mix literature finds that while some form of community involvement has become a common feature in mixed-income transformation, the influence that community members can gain from participation is often limited (Arthurson, 2003; Deboulet & Abram, 2017; Nelson & Lewis, 2021). Participatory processes are



typically framed and governed by professional stakeholders who do not only serve community interests but also have their own nested interests or are held accountable by higher-level decisionmakers (Westin et al., 2021). This may easily curb community influence in participatory processes, leading to “tokenistic” involvement processes where community members may be consulted but where the consultation has no real implications for the urban transformations taking place. This can occur either because community involvement happens too late when key decisions are already locked in (Oliver & Pearl, 2018) or because involvement only includes input that align with the broader project objectives while opposition and conflict is muted (Darcy & Rogers, 2014, p. 247).

Second, while “community” is often framed as a monolithic entity, communities are multifaceted and consist of many voices and interests (Oliver & Pearl, 2018). This is particularly true for mixed-income transformations that by design bring together a mix of different residents. These groups may hold very different opinions about neighborhood transformation, have different interests at stake, and have different capabilities to defend these interests (Chaskin & Joseph, 2015). For example, August (2014) in a study of the Regent Park transformation in Toronto, Canada, finds that middle-class residents were more capable of translating their interests into generally applicable rules (a finding that is confirmed by other studies (Thurber et al., 2018)). Furthermore, as disadvantaged social housing tenants may not have other options in terms of improving their housing situation, they may be less prone to mobilize in the face of extensive redevelopment programs (August, 2016). Social mix literature, then, highlights that the analyses should focus on the particular challenges to community involvement in the context of mixed-income transformation in terms of 1) how inclusive and responsive involvement processes are to resident input and how much influence residents are granted, and 2) how community involvement processes balance the interests of different resident groups.

### **3.3. NETWORK GOVERNANCE LITERATURE**

In this section, I review the network governance literature and extract key insights. I use network governance literature with a particular emphasis on cross-sector collaboration. I apply this literature to add to the understanding of urban practitioners’ work processes since these often play out as collaborative processes spanning different organizations and sectors (Engberg & Larsen, 2010). Consequently, some of the challenges to planning and implementation are arguably related to the cross-sectoral nature of these collaborations (Joseph et al., 2019).

The network governance literature contributes to the analyses by adding to the understanding of the cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary collaborative processes that

take place between practitioners during transformation planning and implementation<sup>8</sup>. In this section, I first introduce network governance<sup>9</sup> and define the concept of cross-sector collaboration. I then lay out the role of cross-sector collaboration in mixed-income transformation before turning to the enablers and impediments to cross-sector collaboration.

### 3.3.1. DEFINING CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

Network governance is a governance model associated with the shift in public administration from Weberian bureaucracy to more distributed forms of governance that involve a range of actors from public administration to market-based actors and the civil society (Rhodes, 1997). The idea in network governance is that it enables knowledge and resources to be pooled across actors thus promoting more innovative and effective solutions. It is often associated with "wicked problems", i.e., complex problems that cross disciplines and sectors, where the underlying causes are fluid and difficult to define, and where solutions are emergent and experimental (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Torfing & Sørensen, 2005).

In this study, I am particularly interested in the concept of cross-sector collaboration as a way to understand the collaborative processes taking place during planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations. Cross-sector collaboration – a concept further developed in Paper 3 – represents a form network governance (Bryson et al., 2015). In Paper 3, I define cross-sector collaboration as “collaboration involving actors from different sectors who exchange information, resources, activities, and

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<sup>8</sup> The use of network governance theory in this dissertation does not imply that collaboration between different stakeholders in mixed-income transformation necessarily complies with the basic assumptions about governance networks (Innes & Booher, 2003; Provan & Kenis, 2007). Rather, the theory is applied in this study to illuminate and understand the collaborative processes at play in mixed-income transformation both in terms of the wicked problems addressed by mixed-income transformations (concentrated disadvantage, marginalization, segregation) and the actual collaborative practices taking place between stakeholders across public, private, and civic sectors as well as from a number of different organizations and professions.

<sup>9</sup> When used in the field of urban planning, network governance is sometimes referred to as “collaborative planning” (Healey, 2009; Sehested, 2009). In this dissertation, however, I focus not only on physical planning but also on community development and social work. Therefore, I choose to use the term “network governance”, which applies to both the fields of planning and community development (Torfing & Sørensen, 2005; van Bortel, 2009).

ideas to achieve outcomes that each actor cannot achieve on their own” (Kjeldsen, under review).

### **3.3.2. THE ROLE OF CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION IN MIXED-INCOME TRANSFORMATION**

Cross-sector collaboration plays a central role in the planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations. Therefore, network governance theory is often applied in order to understand the governance and implementation of these processes (Manzi, 2010). Thus, Vale (2019) demonstrates how governance constellations impact the processes and outcomes of mixed-income transformation projects. Similarly, Joseph et al. (2019) applies network governance theory to examine the challenges related to cross-sector collaboration in mixed-income transformation, while van Bortel (2009) uses network governance theory to analyze collaborative processes between municipality, social landlords, and other stakeholders in an urban regeneration project in Groningen, Netherlands.

Cross-sector collaboration in mixed-income transformation may be particularly relevant as a means to integrate the physical dimension of urban planning with the social dimension of community building. Thus, some social mix studies have highlighted the need for more comprehensive approaches to mixed-income transformation that does not see physical transformation and community building as two separate disciplines but as mutually enforcing elements in a holistic redevelopment approach (Chaskin et al., 1997; Gress et al., 2019; Kubish et al., 2010). This would entail different disciplines and vocational groups such as planners, urban developers and architects work together with community builders, social workers, and resident counselors (Jackson, 2020; Kubisch et al., 2010). This requires collaboration that spans different sectors, organizations, and vocational disciplines.

### **3.3.3. ENABLERS AND IMPEDIMENTS TO CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION**

In this section, I outline the enablers and impediments to cross-sector collaboration in mixed-income transformation. Thus, while network governance and collaborative planning may be an influential mode of organizing urban planning and implementation processes, it is reliant on favorable contextual circumstances to work. In this section, I first account for the enablers of cross-sector collaboration before turning to the impediments.

First, cross-sector collaboration works best in a context where the different actors depend on each other to achieve their goals. Furthermore, a relatively balanced distribution of power, a high level of trust, and traditions of cooperation are enabling factors (Ansell & Torfing, 2021). At the same time, cross-sector collaboration relies on the presence of a legitimate leader who can initiate and manage collaboration. In particular, network management is necessary in order to mobilize and involve stakeholders, facilitate collaboration, delegate responsibility, and promote creative thinking. Management, then, can be seen as a catalyst for collaboration (Provan and Kenis, 2007; Torfing et al. 2017, p. 20).

Second, despite the advantages of cross-sector collaboration, a number of factors may impede or prevent collaboration from taking place. Diverging goals is one such factor. While network governance rests on the idea that stakeholders contribute through collaboration to the advancement of shared goals, different stakeholder organizations often have divergent and sometimes conflicting goals. Organizational and financial silos mean that different stakeholders tend to follow different institutional logics that may in turn hamper incentives to collaborate (Bryson et al., 2015; Engberg & Larsen, 2007). Furthermore, differences in organizational and vocational cultures, values, and terminologies shape the way stakeholders make sense of the world. Translation problems between stakeholders from different organizations who understand phenomena in fundamentally different ways also pose a challenge to network-based collaboration and governance.

Lack of trust between stakeholders, including lack of trust between citizens and professional stakeholders, is another factor that challenges network collaboration. This is particularly relevant in mixed-income transformations as local stakeholders in marginalized neighborhoods often have lower trust in authorities and decision-makers (Agger & Jensen, 2021). Some local stakeholders refrain from cooperating with authorities out of fear of losing credibility in the neighborhood. Building trust, raising motivation, and creating local alliances is therefore a crucial capacity for place-based leadership (ibid.).

### **3.4. COMBINING THE THREE STREAMS OF LITERATURE**

After reviewing the three streams of literature, this final section summarizes how the combined literature contributes to my analysis and to answering the research question: *“How do practitioners address urban social sustainability in planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations?”*. The combined literatures draws attention to five factors that the study and research papers should focus on: The commitment to promoting social equity through mixed-income transformation projects, the role of community involvement, the way planning and implementation processes address community building and community cohesion, the way

stakeholders are held accountable for delivering socially sustainable outcomes, and finally the way the cross-sector collaborative processes affect mixed-income transformation planning and implementation.

First, the study should focus on the role of social equity in mixed-income transformation – both in terms of the way promoting social equity is framed as a fundamental objective behind the transformations and in terms of how practitioners deal with the paradoxes and dilemmas they face during the process. Thus, urban social sustainability literature emphasizes social equity as a basic component of sustainable urban development. Furthermore, social mix literature draws attention to the fact that mixed-income transformations are stretched between a number of potentially conflicting purposes and interests. This entails that the focus on improving living conditions for low-income residents is often put under pressure as transformations must also cater to other and more powerful stakeholders.

Second, the social sustainability literature draws attention to the participation and involvement of communities in urban development processes as influential in addressing the different perspectives and implications that urban development has for different stakeholders. Social mix literature clarifies this focus by highlighting the particular challenges to community involvement in a mixed-income transformation context. It, then, suggests that the study should focus on the extent to which community involvement is inclusive of all types of residents, susceptible to resident input, and effective in transforming community involvement into actual impact on transformation planning and implementation. A focus on the way practitioners design and facilitate community involvement processes should therefore be part of the analysis.

Third, the study should focus on the way practitioners promote the emergence of socially inclusive and cohesive communities. Thus, urban social sustainability literature draws attention to the importance of developing cohesive communities, both through the planning and design of the built environment and by addressing the intangible social dimension of urban development including the promotion of social interaction and inclusive social practices. Social mix literature adds to this focus by clarifying the challenges of community building in mixed-income neighborhoods. These challenges relate to differences in interests and habits as well as stigmatization and othering between different resident groups in mixed-income neighborhoods. The social mix literature suggests that intentional efforts should be devoted to overcoming these challenges.

Fourth, the literature review highlights the significance of commitment and accountability to the way practitioners address social sustainability. Thus, as Stender & Walther (2019) observe, urban development actors are prone to “social washing”, i.e., paying lip service to social sustainability without being held accountable for

delivering on their promises. Thus, the analysis should focus on the status that social sustainability has in terms of policy- and transformation objectives.

Finally, the network governance literature supplements the other two streams of literature by drawing attention to the way cross-sectoral collaborative processes affect mixed-income transformation planning and implementation. With mixed-income transformation planning and implementation spanning multiple sectors and vocational disciplines, network governance literature suggests that challenges and opportunities related to cross-sector collaboration in itself has implications for the way practitioners navigate mixed-income transformation. The literature particularly addresses the challenges related to holistic and comprehensive transformation efforts that integrate physical transformation efforts with social work and community building. This is relevant to social sustainability because it affects the way transformation facilitates the emergence of cohesive and inclusive communities. It may also affect the way community needs and aspirations are addressed by transformations and the way community participation is designed and facilitated. Thus, the analyses should focus on the collaborative processes between different groups of practitioners, including representatives of the physical planning dimension and the social and community development dimension.

With these focus points laid out, I now turn to a description of my research designs and research methods.



*Figure 4: Garden days. Landscaping new community gardens in Tingbjerg, 2022. Photos by the author.*

## CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES

This chapter presents the research design and methodologies applied in the study. While each paper describes the applied research methods in brief, this chapter offers a more detailed description of the overall research design and methodologies. I start by outlining the overall research design, which falls in two parts, both of which draw on case-study designs. I then go on to describe in further detail each of the two parts, accounting for and reflecting on the methodologies applied in each part. Finally, I reflect on questions of positionality and research ethics as well as the generalizability and limitations of the study.

### 4.1. THE CHOICE OF A CASE-STUDY BASED APPROACH

As previously mentioned, the study falls in two parts that both draw on case-study research designs. Case-study research designs are characterized by a small number of cases but a large number of empirical observations for each case (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). Thus, the case-study approach is often preferred when the research question requires depth and detail rather than width and when the research calls for a deeper understanding of the relationship between a phenomenon and its' context (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007, p. 52; Blatter & Haverland, 2014).

In this study, my choice to apply a case-study based approach is motivated by the fact that my research questions all address the detailed and complex processes of mixed-income transformation planning and implementation (see section 1.3, "Research questions"). Answering these questions calls for detail and nuance, a diversity of empirical observations, and a triangulation of different types of data and research methods. The case-study approach offers these advantages (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). However, the case-study approach also posed challenges and limitations to this study. I return to these limitations in section 4.4.

The two parts of the study apply different case-study approaches and different types of data. The first part is a multiple case-study (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007) spanning five different non-profit housing estates slated for mixed-income transformation as a consequence of the Parallel Society Act. With this first part of the study, I wanted to explore the dilemmas that practitioners faced in mixed-income transformations across diverse contexts. I wanted to find out which dilemmas and challenges were most pertinent across contexts partly because this would in itself be a relevant finding and



partly to direct the focus of the second part of this study. The findings from the first part of the study are reported in Paper 1.

The second part of the study is a process-tracing single-case study (Blatter & Haverland, 2014) of the transformation planning and implementation processes in a single non-profit housing estate, i.e., the estate Tingbjerg in Copenhagen. The purpose of the second part of the study is to examine in further depth the way practitioners address in practice the dilemmas and paradoxes they face. I wanted to understand the drivers and impediments for practitioners to address different aspects of urban social sustainability in transformation planning and implementation. In particular, I wanted to explore the practices of community involvement as well as the cross-sector collaborations going on between different stakeholders during mixed-income planning and implementation. I found the process-tracing single case-study best suited for generating this type of insights (*ibid.*). The findings from the second part of the study are reported in Paper 2 and Paper 3.

Both designs are described in further detail in section 4.2 and 4.3. Table 1 summarizes the aims, research questions, case-selection, and research methods of the two parts of the study:

*Table 1: Overview of research designs for part 1 and 2 of the study*

	<b>Part 1: Multiple case-study</b>	<b>Part 2: Process-tracing single case-study</b>
Outlet	Paper 1	Paper 2 and Paper 3
Aim	Identify shared dilemmas faced by practitioners across Danish mixed-income transformation projects	Examine how practitioners address social sustainability in transformation planning and implementation in practice
Research questions	How may social sustainability as an analytical framework contribute to understanding the planning dilemmas embedded in mixed-income transformation?	What role does community involvement play in mixed-income transformations and what are the facilitators and barriers?  How do planners and community workers collaborate on mixed-income transformation in marginalized neighborhoods and which factors enable and impede collaboration?
Cases	Tingbjerg, Copenhagen Ringparken, Slagelse Vollsmose, Odense Bispehaven, Aarhus Gellerupparken, Aarhus	Tingbjerg, Copenhagen
Criteria for case-selection	Substantial level of tenure-mix outlined in transformation plans. Contextual variation in terms of: Estate size, geographical location, market conditions, use of non-profit housing demolitions	Theoretical argument: Critical case representing transformation conditions that favor socially sustainable approaches.  Practical argument: Accessibility, timing, willingness to collaborate, and availability of data
Research methods	Review of planning documents Qualitative interviews with urban practitioners	Review of planning documents Repeated qualitative interviews with urban practitioners Qualitative interviews with residents Participant observations

## 4.2. PART 1: MULTIPLE CASE-STUDY

In this section, I reflect on the research design and methodologies applied in the first part of the study: the multiple case-study. As mentioned, my aim was to examine the dilemmas that practitioners faced when planning and implementing mixed-income transformation across diverse contexts in Denmark and understanding these dilemmas through the concept of social sustainability. The research question for this part of the study – which is also the research question in Paper 1 – was:

How may “applying social sustainability as an analytical framework (...) contribute to understanding the planning dilemmas embedded in mixed-tenure regeneration”? (Kjeldsen & Stender, 2022, p. 710)

Antoft and Salomonsen (2007) distinguish between four types of case-studies depending on whether they are atheoretical, theory-generating, theory-testing, or theory-interpreting. Part 1 of this study primarily falls within the last category: A case-study that aims to add to our empirical knowledge by using theory on new empirical instances or comparing different theories’ ability to contribute to our understanding of a phenomena. In this type of case-study, the theory offers a frame that structures the empirical material and helps identify patterns (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007, p. 39).

I apply variance in cases to test whether the concept of social sustainability offers a framework that is applicable across cases. I choose a variation of cases that all have mixed-income transformation as a common trait but vary on most other parameters including size, geographical location, market conditions of the estate and use of non-profit housing demolitions as a transformation instrument. The aim of this part of the study, then, is to test whether the concept of social sustainability offers a productive framework for understanding mixed-tenure transformation challenges and dilemmas. Thus, in Blatter and Blume’s (2008, p. 327) words, the aim is to use the empirical cases “to draw inferences about the relevance of theoretical concepts”, i.e., to examine how introducing a “new” conceptual lens adds new understandings of the phenomenon (ibid., p. 331).

Antoft and Salomonsen (2007, p. 40f) stress that this type of design will often draw on different theories to interpret empirical observations. This is because the use of different theories will open up the study of different interpretations of the data, leading to more nuanced and sometimes surprising insights. From this perspective it can be seen as a weakness that the study design does not compare the explanatory power of different theories. However, the approach taken in this study does to some extent take this into account by combining different streams of literature in the data analysis which are utilized in a complementary rather than comparative way.

#### 4.2.1. CASE-SELECTION FOR THE MULTIPLE CASE-STUDY

As mentioned, in this first part of the study, I wanted to examine common themes and challenges across mixed-income transformations in diverse contexts (though this diversity was limited by the fact that all cases were Danish non-profit housing estates and all were slated for transformation as a consequence of the Parallel Society Act). I was interested in the challenges and dilemmas that mixed-income transformation raised, cf. the discussion of these challenges in section 3.2 (“Social mix literature”). Therefore, I was interested in cases that planned to introduce a substantial mix of different tenures, i.e., cases that were preparing for substantial investments in private new-build to supplement the existing non-profit housing stock. This called for a strategic choice of cases (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007, p. 42), which was less straightforward than it may appear. Thus, the Parallel Society Act actually opens the possibility to many different strategies to reduce the concentration of non-profit family housing, many of which do not necessarily entail introducing private housing on the estate (cf., section 2.2.3). Instead, housing associations and municipalities may opt to simply demolish the existing housing stock or convert family housing to senior or youth housing.

To select cases of non-profit housing estate transformation that were planned to introduce a significant amount of private housing, I chose to start by reviewing the transformation plans submitted by housing associations and municipalities to the Housing and Planning Authority to isolate estates that planned to introduce a mix of private and non-profit housing with private units preferably comprising a substantial share. Going through the transformation plans, I compared the number of private units included in the plans with the number of non-profit family housing units that were to be preserved. The ratio varied enormously from no private units in some cases to a 50/50 split between private and non-profit family units in others<sup>10</sup>. I identified five cases, where the ratio between private units and non-profit family housing was at least 40/60<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> It may be counterintuitive that the mix between non-profit family housing units and private units is not higher than 50/50 in favor of private units, when the Parallel Society Act explicitly dictates a maximum of 40 pct. non-profit family housing. The explanation, however, is that other types of units are also included when calculating the relative share of non-profit family housing, including youth and senior units, as well as commercial retail and commercial spaces. Thus, the 40 pct. threshold refers to be the relative share of non-profit family housing compared to all other types of units within the estate (Regeringen, 2018a).

<sup>11</sup> A potential sixth case was omitted since transformation in this case was planned to rely almost exclusively on sales rather than new-build, which I assessed would allow for a limited insight into actual transformation planning and implementation compared to scenarios involving extensive new-build, demolitions etc.

The five cases not only represented similar tenure-mix scenarios. They also represented a variation in the contextual preconditions for transformation in terms of size, location, market conditions, scale of redevelopment, and the use of different instruments including demolitions. Thus, the five cases satisfied my need for a sample representing variation on parameters with relevance to the transformation process.

Table 2 below presents the five cases included in part 1 of the study. The table is reproduced from Paper 1 (Kjeldsen & Stender, 2022, p. 713).

*Table 2: Presentation of the five cases*

Characteristics	Tingbjerg	Ringparken	Vollsmose	Gellerup-parken	Bispehaven
<b>Constructed</b>	1958-1972	1967-1972	1967-1981	1963-1969	1969-1973
<b>Market conditions*</b>	Favorable	Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Medium	Medium
<b>Population, 2020</b>	6,290	1,963	7,259	4,965	2,216
<b>No. of non-profit family housing units, 2010**</b>	2,404	868	2,872	2,400	871
<b>Non-profit family housing units demolished or merged by 2030***</b>	54	149	1,000	945	318
<b>(Percentage of total units, 2030)</b>	(1 pct.)	(11 pct.)	(19 pct.)	(21 pct.)	(23 pct.)
<b>Non-profit family housing units retained by 2030***</b>	2,234	520	1,872	1,455	553
<b>(Percentage of total units, 2030)</b>	(38 pct.)	(40 pct.)	(35 pct.)	(32 pct.)	(40 pct.)
<b>Private housing units by 2030***</b>	2,196	364	1,600	1,344	230
<b>(Percentage of total units, 2030)</b>	(38 pct.)	(28 pct.)	(30 pct.)	(29 pct.)	(16 pct.)
<b>Other types of units (youth, senior, commercial) by 2030***</b>	1,360	267	923	825	295
<b>(Percentage of total units, 2030)</b>	(23 pct.)	(21 pct.)	(17 pct.)	(18 pct.)	(21 pct.)

\*Assessment based on estimated value of current non-profit housing stock (Copenhagen Economics, 2019).

\*\* 2010 constitutes the Parallel Society Act baseline year for tracking the share of non-profit family housing units.

Source: Plans for regeneration, 2019. <https://tbst.dk/da/Bolig/Lister/Publikationslisteside?type=Udviklingsplan> (accessed September 2021)

\*\*\* According to Parallel Society Act transformation plans.

#### 4.2.2. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH URBAN PRACTITIONERS

As this part of the study focused on planning dilemmas faced by urban practitioners, I chose to use qualitative interviews with practitioners as my primary research methodology. I wanted the study to include the main stakeholders represented in each transformation project since I expected the different stakeholders to offer different perspectives.

Representatives of the relevant housing associations who were responsible for the transformation projects helped me identify five types of stakeholders involved in the early stages of the projects: 1) Planners and urban developers from housing associations and 2) their municipal counterparts, 3) private investors and developers (though these could not be identified in all cases), 4) external advisors to the housing authorities, the city, or the developers (such as architects or planning consultants), and 5) locally based ‘community work programs’ (Andersen et al., 2014, p. 5; Birk, 2017). In each estate, I identified the relevant interviewees through snowball sampling (Robinson, 2014). Marcus et al. (2017) warns that snowball sampling will sometimes lead to a biased sample. However, at this early stage of the transformation projects, relatively few stakeholders were involved which allowed me to quickly get a full overview of potential interviewees in order to avoid bias (Kjeldsen & Stender, 2021). The different set-ups across cases, however, meant that in some cases responsibilities were dispersed among different people which made it necessary to interview more than one person in some organizations. This amounted to 27 interviews with 33 practitioners across the five estates.

*Table 3: Overview of urban practitioner interviewees*

	<b>Gellerup</b>	<b>Bispehaven</b>	<b>Vollsmose</b>	<b>Ringparken</b>	<b>Tingbjerg</b>
Housing association planners & developers	2	3	3	1	1
City planners and strategists	1	1	2	1	3
Developers and investors	2	N/A*	N/A*	1	1
External advisors	1	1	1	2	1
Community work program managers	1	1	1	1	1

*\*At the time of data collection, no private investors or developers were in place in Vollsmose and Bispehaven.*

Interviews were conducted in the spring of 2020. This offered both expected and unexpected challenges. First, with transformation plans submitted as late as summer 2019, transformation projects were still in their early days. Therefore, interviewees in many cases had not yet experienced what challenges and dilemmas might be faced

during the process. Interviews thus sometimes reflected practitioners' expectations and imaginaries rather than their reflections on lived experience.

Second, the unexpected arrival of the COVID pandemic also challenged data-collection. Originally, I wanted to do the interviews at the interviewees' place of work to offer the comfort of home-ground which I anticipated would provide for more open and honest accounts (Kvale, 1997, p. 129). However, with the COVID pandemic, traveling and social contact became a hinderance, and I was forced to switch to another form of interviewing. I opted for telephone interviewing (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). Not being able to interact physically with the interviewees meant that I needed to spend a little time in the beginning of each interview establishing trust. My prior review of transformation plans came in handy here, as I was able to demonstrate to the interviewees that I was knowledgeable of their context – something that according to Harvey (2011) is often an advantage in order to establish trustworthiness in expert interviews.

Interviews were semi-structured, meaning that I followed an interview guide (Appendix A) but also allowed interviews to follow the specific themes as they emerged in each interview (Kvale, 1997). With interviews spanning many different contexts, this approach allowed for flexibility in the interviewing situation. However, it raised some challenges when interviews (which were all recorded and transcribed) had to be coded using Nvivo11. Thus, the first coding followed the themes in the interview guide but resulted in some very broad and mixed categories in terms of content. I therefore did a second iteration of the coding based on a more inductive reading of the material, which produced a number of sub-codes based on the various themes emerging from the data (Locke et al., 2022).

### **4.3. PART 2: PROCESS-TRACING SINGLE CASE-STUDY**

For the second part of the study, I needed to go deeper into the practices and processes of mixed-income transformation building on the themes and dilemmas discovered in part 1. This was necessary in order to be able to answer the two research questions posed in this second part of the study:

*What role does community involvement play in mixed-income transformations and what are the facilitators and barriers? (Paper 2)*

*How do planners and community workers collaborate on mixed-income transformation in marginalized neighborhoods and which factors enable and impede collaboration? (Paper 3)*

In this section, I first reflect on the choice of doing an in-depth process tracing case-study and motivate my choice of case. I then go on to describe and reflect on the use

of qualitative interviews with practitioners and residents as well as participant observations as sources of data for this part of the study.

#### **4.3.1. A DETOUR TO AN IN-DEPTH SINGLE CASE-STUDY**

My initial ambition was to apply action research methods to develop new solutions to the challenges raised in part 1 of the study in collaboration with practitioners. Action research is a research strategy that combines elements of researcher-induced or co-induced interventions (actions) aimed at solving practical problems by creating development and change in organizations or communities with research and theoretical reflections on the processes, practices, and outcomes of these interventions (Duus et al., 2012; Frimann et al., 2020; McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Thus, initially I was not only interested in studying the way practitioners address planning dilemmas related to social sustainability but also in contributing to the development of new and more sustainable transformation practices.

In the spring of 2021, I therefore reached out to the Urban Development Team in Tingbjerg – a team of planners and urban developers employed by the non-profit housing associations and placed locally in Tingbjerg to help oversee, plan, and implement the transformation of the estate. I pitched the idea of conducting a prolonged action research study of the urban transformation process taking place in the estate. They agreed to have me on board. Furthermore, we agreed to jointly carry out some field experiments to test new ways of working with social sustainability, community involvement, and the coupling of social and physical transformation efforts. The Urban Development Team provided an office space for me in Tingbjerg and granted me access to work processes and meetings so that I could follow the work first-hand.

However, the ambition to develop and test new methods was never fulfilled. Plans to engage practitioners in the development of new methods was curbed in practice by practitioners' lack of resources as well as risk-aversion among managers. I realized along the way that the high-stakes, high-risk, high-complexity environment that is a mixed-income transformation project is not always conducive to experimentation. I therefore decided to switch strategy. At this stage, I had already spent considerable resources gaining access and establishing relations with stakeholders. I decided to change my focus from developing new methods to studying the practices and processes as they unfolded during the transformation planning and implementation. Thus, I switched to what Blatter and Haverland (2014) term a process tracing single case-study design. The choice of a process-tracing single-case study design was motivated by an interest in gaining a deep insight into the processes, conditions, and mechanisms at play. The process-tracing approach to case-studies is described by Blatter and Haverland (2014, p. 80) as a Y-centered approach in the sense that it



focuses on “the many and complex causes of a specific outcome (Y)” rather than the effects of a specific independent variable. The choice of a process-focused research design was motivated by my interest in the complex interplay between different stakeholders, activities, projects, and processes involved in mixed-income transformation planning and implementation. The idea when applying a process-tracing approach is that causal inferences can be made by tracing the processes that lead to certain outcomes, i.e., that causal configurations can be seen as sequential and situational combinations of causal mechanisms (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). Trying to identify not only how practitioners address social sustainability in the planning and implementation process (the Y) but also why they do what they do, the enablers and impediments they face (the X’s) constitutes a form of causal process-tracing.

The process-tracing approach is useful when exploring theory-based mechanisms (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). In part 2 of the study, I was interested in exploring the theoretical mechanisms identified in part 1, i.e., how mixed-income transformation planning and implementation addresses questions of equity, cohesion, and participation, and how these mechanisms combine the social and physical dimensions of transformation (cf. section 1.3 and 3.4). The process-tracing approach allowed me to track activities over time in order to understand how outcomes are produced and reproduced through repeated interactions between stakeholders under shifting conditions. The temporal order helped me to understand what mechanisms were influential in producing the outcomes I was able to observe.

#### **4.3.2. CASE-SELECTION FOR THE PROCESS-TRACING SINGLE CASE-STUDY**

I chose the transformation of the renowned non-profit housing estate Tingbjerg on the outskirts of Copenhagen as my case for the process-tracing case-study<sup>12</sup>. Given the temporal constraints of my project – the fact that my study was confined to the period of 2020 to 2023 – the case was temporally bounded to the early stages of the transformation process. This means, as previously discussed, that the case does not speak to the outcomes or effects of the transformation but to the process.

Furthermore, only the early phases of the process (which according to plans will continue until 2030) are included. Any organizational learning that may happen during the later stages of the process is not reflected by this study.

Antoft and Salomonsen (2007, p. 44) argue that a case can be selected due to its theoretical relevance, or for strategic, practical, or even emotional reasons.

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, selecting the case temporally predated my decision to switch to a process-tracing case-study design. Thus, when I selected the case, I was still imagining that the study would be action research based.

Tingbjerg was chosen both for theoretical and practical reasons. First, I was interested in examining practices relating to the concept of social sustainability, including community involvement processes and efforts directed at inclusive community building. The Tingbjerg case was selected since I assessed it to represent a critical (Flyvbjerg, 2006) or ‘extreme’ case (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007, p. 44). The conditions that render Tingbjerg a critical case include 1) favorable market conditions (making it possible for sellers (housing associations) to compel buyers (developers) to consider social sustainability, 2) high-quality architecture and landscaping (increasing the chances for addressing social sustainability), and 3) a shared vision from housing associations, the municipality, and developers to build an inclusive and socially cohesive community. Furthermore, Tingbjerg was extreme in the sense that the transformation plans almost entirely abstain from non-profit housing demolitions, focusing instead on private infill construction as the main instrument to reach the 40 percent family non-profit housing threshold.

One argument for choosing an extreme case in the sense of a ‘most likely case’ can be if we are uncertain regarding to what extent the phenomenon we want to observe even exists (*ibid.*). This is the case with addressing social sustainability, for example in terms of community involvement and integration of the social dimension into mixed-income planning and implementation. Tingbjerg, in my assessment, had the best preconditions for actually manifesting the phenomenon I was interested in and thus provided the best conditions for a detailed observation of the phenomenon. In other words, if it did not “work” here, I assessed that it would be unlikely to work anywhere else (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007, p. 42). Congruently, if barriers and impediments were detected in Tingbjerg, they were likely also to be featured in other, less favorable contexts.

Second, there were practical arguments for choosing Tingbjerg. Thus, in process-tracing case-studies access to data and processes constitutes a relevant argument for selecting a case because of the deep access necessary for this type of study (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). Tingbjerg was accessible both due to stakeholders’ willingness to cooperate their level of progression in the redevelopment process (Tingbjerg redevelopment started early due to existing redevelopment initiatives already in process while most other estates had not yet reached the level of actually implementing redevelopment plans), as well as the physical location which enabled me to access the redevelopment site continuously over time.

#### **4.3.3. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS**

The primary research method applied in the process-tracing case-study was participant observations. I spent six months at Tingbjerg in the spring of 2021 and another six months in the spring of 2022 both following practitioners working on the

estate and talking to residents and external stakeholders. During the first half a year of 2021, I spent 37 field days working at Tingbjerg. The process was very open and inductive. A key objective was to build trust, gain access, and get to know the transformation planning and implementation process as well as the many stakeholders involved in different aspects of the process (Kawulich, 2005). I spent a significant amount of time getting an overview of the many complex and intertwined elements of the planning and implementation process as well as considering which processes were most relevant for further in-depth study.

According to Krogstrup and Kristiansen (2015, p. 54), the advantage of an explorative approach is that it allows the researcher to observe how actors perceive and interpret social phenomena as well as how they plan and act in situations without imposing a preconceived frame of interpretation. Thus, the observation of practices and day-to-day routines can be informed by theory without being fully structured beforehand. As the transformation process was at this point characterized by unpredictability and a “building the ship while sailing” approach, data also pointed in many different directions. Field work would often take me in directions that I felt were beyond my control. After this first phase of field work, I therefore decided that going forward field studies and observations should be more narrowly guided by my research questions and theory (Kawulich, 2005). Thus, I returned to the university to do further literature studies with a particular focus on cross-sector collaboration and community involvement. This literature, in turn, informed the second part of my field work as I returned to the estate for another approximately 30 days of participant observation in the spring and summer of 2022.

During my time in Tingbjerg, my main affiliation was with the Urban Development Team and the Community Work Program team. I shared offices with both teams and had a desk at my disposal at their offices, which were located about five minutes’ walk from each other.

Krogstrup & Kristiansen (2015, p. 94) distinguish between four modes of doing participant observation with reference to the researchers’ immersion in the field of study: The total participant, the participant as observer, the observer as participant, and the total observer. My approach was that of the participant as observer. I would typically limit my field research to 1-2 days pr. week, and during these field days, I would often check in with different stakeholders and participate in some of their activities. I participated in work meetings and followed practitioners as they went about their business, but I also engaged in discussions and dialogue and offered my input during meetings. In particular, I participated in events and meetings between practitioners and residents about the transformation on various occasions where I also (in some cases) participated actively with the residents. Events varied enormously, from large-scale public hearings to smaller courtyard meetings, workshops and garden days to formal board meetings with voting procedures, and community-driven

activities to events facilitated by external partners. Participating in these events gave me insight into the implications of using different participatory formats.

Data consisted of field notes taken during or after each field day. I dictated field notes into my phone and later edited them for detail and readability. During the field work, I took pictures of the transformation as it progressed and of the events, I participated in. This helped me remember details about the different stages of transformation planning and implementation (Krogstrup & Kristiansen, 150). Furthermore, I carried out numerous ad hoc interviews with practitioners as different situations or reflections arose during the day. Interviews were recorded from memory in my field notes (Kawulich, 2005). All field notes were in turn entered into Nvivo11, coded, and analyzed together with interview data.

#### **4.3.4. REPEATED QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH PRACTITIONERS**

To supplement field observations, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with the main stakeholders at various points in time. The first interviews were conducted during Part 1 of the study in the spring of 2020. The same stakeholders as well as some additional stakeholders were interviewed in the summer of 2021 and again in the fall of 2022. The purpose of the repeated interviews was to analyze how practitioners' perception of the transformation process evolved during the course of the project.

The stakeholders were identified through my field work while doing participant observations at the estate, which introduced me to a range of people involved in the transformation project. Due to staff turnover and changes in stakeholder organizations over time, it was not possible in all cases to interview the same individuals during all three years of the study. Instead, I identified key roles within each stakeholder organization to interview each of the three years of the study (Kjeldsen & Joseph, under review). Main stakeholders were key representatives of organizations directly involved in the transformation project. These included management and staff at the non-profit housing associations planning team, i.e., the Urban Development Team. Furthermore, the non-profit housing association's community work program manager and some members of staff were also involved in the transformation as were representatives of two private development companies. The city of Copenhagen was also involved, particularly in the early stages (SAB/KAB et al., 2020). In 2021, the city played a more withdrawn role, mainly focusing on the bureaucratic processes related to approving the new district plan. I chose not to interview city representatives at this point. However, by 2022 the city had reestablished its presence in the neighborhood, i.e., with a coordinator solely committed to the project. I therefore chose to include city representatives in the last round of interviews.

All main stakeholders were strongly involved in the transformation project and often had a strong presence on the estate. All were in contact with residents and, for the urban development and community work program teams, contact took place on a daily basis. I also wanted to solicit additional perspectives on the planning and implementation from stakeholders outside the planning process. These additional stakeholders included additional city staff and an external advisor (both were mainly relevant in the early stages) as well as staff at an NGO and a local cultural center, who were working on community-based projects. Finally, in the last round of interviews in 2022, I interviewed the directors of the two non-profit housing associations. While these directors were positioned with some distance from the day-to-day processes of the transformation, they had the overall strategic responsibility and were able to provide useful insights into the strategic considerations behind the plan.

An overview of the interviews is summarized in Table 4 below. The table is reproduced from Paper 2 (Kjeldsen & Joseph, in review).

*Table 4: Repeated stakeholder interviews*

	Organization	Role	Number of interviews		
			2020	2021	2022
Core stakeholders	NPH* planning team	Manager and staff, Urban Development Team	1	4	3
	NPH community work team	Project manager and frontline staff	1	3	2
	City	Staff, Mayors Office, Housing Division	2	-	2
	Private developers	Project managers and consultants	1	3	2
Additional stakeholders	NPH associations	Directors	-	-	2
	City	Staff, Planning Division	1	-	-
	External advisor	Landscape architect	1	-	-
	NGO	Project manager	-	1	-
	Cultural Center	Community consultant	-	1	-

*\*NPH: Non-profit housing*

As mentioned previously, interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews following an interview guide. The interview guide used in the first round of interviews is included in Appendix A. However, at the time of the second and third round of interviews, I had already obtained a deeper knowledge of each stakeholder's role and involvement in the transformation process, which allowed me to tailor individual

interview guides that focused on the specific questions I had for that particular stakeholder. I have chosen not to include these numerous tailored interview guides in the appendices.

Data was subsequently transcribed and coded using Nvivo11. First, theory-driven coding was used to organize the data according to themes in the literature. Second, inductive coding based on the themes that emerged from the data was used to generate a number of sub-themes (Harvey, 2011).

#### **4.3.5. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH RESIDENTS**

In addition to interviews with practitioners, I conducted interviews with 19 residents in Tingbjerg during the summer of 2022. Resident interviews were focused on residents' experiences with and attitudes towards the transformation project and in particular the involvement of the residents in the planning and implementation process.

One of my concerns with resident interviews was timing. Since resident interviews provided new perspectives that could inform both participant observations and practitioner interviews, I did not want to wait too long before interviewing residents. On the other hand, I wanted to know about residents' experiences with the transformation and with community involvement processes. As both processes took some time to get underway, I decided to push resident interviews until the final part of my field study and immediately before the last round of practitioner interviews.

Another concern was sampling and recruitment of interviewees. First, while I was interested in residents' experiences with community involvement, I knew from my field work that relatively few residents participated in community involvement activities. I was interested in obtaining different perspectives representing different groups of residents. Some resident groups were relatively few in number – including private homeowners and private renters. To make sure, that I would both get interviews with residents who had little experience with community involvement and residents with more experience – and to make sure that different groups of residents were represented in my sample – I decided to use a stratified sampling approach (Robinson, 2014).

Stratification parameters were chosen to account for factors that I deemed would be likely to influence residents' experiences with community involvement as well as their attitudes towards the transformation process in general. Thus, the sample is diverse and includes:

- Genders (9 male, 10 female)
- Housing typologies (2 homeowners, 2 private renters, 15 non-profit tenants)

- Household compositions (4 young singles or couples, 9 families with children, 6 elderly couples or singles)
- Ethnicities (10 with ethnic Danish background, 9 with minority background)
- Levels of prior community involvement (3 active tenant representatives, 5 active in various community associations, 11 not active)

Residents were recruited using a combination of stakeholder connections and door-to-door outreach. Interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview guide, which is enclosed in Appendix B. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour.

#### **4.4. CONSIDERATIONS ON POSITIONALITY, RESEARCH ETHICS, AND GENERALIZABILITY**

In this section, I reflect on the implications of my own role and position in relation to the people and processes I have studied and how I have addressed this in my research. Furthermore, I reflect on the questions of research ethics that the study raises. Finally, I consider the generalizability of my findings given my choice of research design and methods.

##### **4.4.1. POSITIONALITY**

According to Krogstrup & Kristiansen (2015, p. 106), the researcher's personal characteristics may easily affect the relationship to the field. This means that it can potentially be problematic to engage in a field where you already know the participants or have a lot of prior knowledge (Ibid., p. 110f). You may inadvertently side with informants you already know or those of whom you have prior knowledge of their practices. The personal relationships as well as the identification with the field, then, may impact the observations both in terms of how the researcher perceives and interprets situations, and how participants perceive the researcher and thus act in relation to her or him.

As an outsider with little experience with urban planning but a background in the social sciences and the field of community work, these caveats resonated with me during this research project. I have worked for more than a decade evaluating and studying community work programs and have deep prior knowledge of the field as well as professional relationships with people working in the field. On the other hand, I am relatively unexperienced with the urban planning discipline and have few prior relationships within the field. With this background, *what biases have I inadvertently brought to my research? Have I been siding with community workers while misunderstanding or disregarding the perspectives of other stakeholders?*

While this is entirely possible, I have sought to reduce bias as much as possible. When accessing my research field as participant observer, I accessed it through the people I came into contact with and who acted as gatekeepers to the field (Krogstrup & Kristiansen, 2015, p. 132). This entails the risk that observations and interests become shaped by the perspectives of these gatekeepers. To avoid being too entangled in community work perspectives, I in all cases chose to access the field through planners or urban development practitioners first. Thus, before expanding my research to also encompass community work, I spent time following the work of planners to learn and understand the way they operated.

Another potential bias relates to the fact that most of my gatekeepers were practitioners positioned relatively low in the organizational hierarchy and far removed from strategic decision-making power. This may have shaped my observations in so far as I do not have equally detailed insights into the perceptions of the strategic decisionmakers (ibid, p. 97). I have sought to remedy some of this bias by including strategic decision-makers in my stakeholder interviews. Despite this, strategic decision-makers have not been equally accessible as street-level practitioners during the study.

Finally, during this study I have engaged in dialogue with practitioners and residents and actively participated in activities, meetings, and discussions. Consequently, I have inevitably impacted the empirical phenomena that I have been studying (Krogstrup & Kristiansen, 2015, p. 106). It has been an intentional approach to offer research-based insights to practitioners to help them reflect on their work particularly during the participant observations in the second part of the study. From this perspective, data is “produced” by the researcher rather than simply “collected” – which also means that as a researcher it has been important for me to reflect on my own positionality, my perceptions, and how I impact my subject field (Blatter & Blume, 2008; Krogstrup & Kristiansen, 2015).

#### **4.4.2. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Finally, there were ethical considerations involved with researching a highly politicized field where practices and process potentially had severe implications for practitioners and not least residents, who were often in a marginalized and vulnerable position.

In regard to resident interviews, it was important to me to ensure that residents were fully aware of the purpose of the study and consented to participation. I spent some time explaining to the interviewees the nature of my research. Interviewees were also presented with a written information sheet as well as a consent form, which was produced with guidance from Aalborg University’s legal department. The content of the consent form was explained to interviewees in layman’s terms along with their



right to revoke their consent at any time by contacting me. All interviewees were anonymized, and data was treated with confidentiality.

Furthermore, to minimize discomfort for the interviewees, all interviewees were allowed to choose the time and place of the interview. Some preferred to have me come to their home, while others preferred meeting in my office in Tingbjerg. Finally, while using resident interview carries the risk of exploiting their information for the researchers own interests (Thurber et al., 2020), not interviewing residents was even more untenable. Thus, carrying out the research project without lifting residents' voice into the analysis would have effectively muted resident perspectives on the transformation.

Participant observations and interviews with professional stakeholders also warrant ethical considerations (Krogstrup & Kristiansen, 2015, p. 114). Thus, knowledge and information can be "dangerous" in the sense that the publication of some data may put some informants in a precarious position, and some data may compromise or reflect negatively on some informants. Even if statements are always anonymized in my research papers, I reveal which estate that interviewees are referring to as well as the role they have in the transformation. This may potentially make it possible for people with insider knowledge to identify the people quoted in the research papers.

Thus, I faced the question whether it would be preferable to fully anonymize the settings I refer to in the research (e.g., anonymizing estates by calling them "Estate X"). However, the counterargument to anonymization is that many stakeholders and collaboration partners – themselves having contributed to the research project – would be able to see through it anyway. Some risk of stakeholders "second-guessing" the identity of interviewees is a premise when conducting in-depth place-based research. Removing information about the estates would deprive readers of accessing in-depth contextual factors that are relevant for understanding and interpreting results.

In this light – while also recognizing that professional stakeholders generally hold more powerful and privileged positions in comparison with, e.g., residents – I opted in favor of disclosing the real names of places and organizations appearing in this study. However, during my field work I was also exposed to many situations and statements revealing organizational and personal conflicts or situations where informants were caught in less-than-flattering situations. For ethical reasons, I have chosen not to include these in the findings.

All interviewees received written information and an oral presentation of the study. All were presented with and signed a consent form, which was produced with guidance from Aalborg University's legal department. All were carefully instructed of their right to at any time revoke their consent by contacting me. Consent was obtained from all interviewees included in the study. Furthermore, collaboration agreements were signed with key stakeholders granting me full access to observing

and taking notes at meetings and other work-processes. When participating in meetings oral confirmation was attained from all participants that my participation in the activities was accepted by the other participants. Thus, observation was always overt and consensual (Kawulich, 2005).

Both resident and practitioner interview data was stored safely on an encrypted and protected drive, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As part of the data-management agreement, all data was set to be deleted no later than five years after the completion of the study – something that was also stated on the consent forms.

#### 4.4.3. GENERALIZABILITY AND LIMITATIONS

A final methodological consideration that warrants mention here is the question of the generalizability of the research findings. While case-study research has been criticized for having limited generalizability (Flyvbjerg, 2006), Antoft and Salomonsen (2007, p. 49) argue that case-study based findings can in fact be generalized beyond their own context. They term this *analytical generalization* which entails that the empirical findings are connected with theoretical expectations.

Generalizability is impacted by the contextual and temporal boundedness of the case-study, and the temporal boundaries of a case-study are part of this boundedness to context. For this study, this entails that the study reflects how mixed-income transformations were perceived and implemented by practitioners at a certain point in time – i.e., during the first 3-4 years of implementing the Parallel Society Act – when uncertainties were still substantial, know-how limited, and the organizational setups and project objectives still being developed. Notably, the study does not cover the *outcomes* of Danish mixed-income transformations, as transformations were far from complete at the time of the study but only *planning and implementation processes*. Furthermore, the study reflects housing market conditions and the wider social, economic, and political climate of the time while also, in a broader sense, reflecting the context of a Scandinavian welfare state regime and the distinct Danish non-profit housing model (Antoft & Salomonsen, 2007).

Last but not least, the study focuses on mixed-income transformations that were initiated as a consequence of the Parallel Society Act. These framework conditions – which are described in further detail in section 2.2.3 – differ from most other transformation contexts in the sense that the outcomes in terms of tenure-mix and deadlines are partially pre-defined through legislation. This challenges generalizability beyond this specific context, as stakeholders may have chosen to address mixed-income transformations differently had the legislation not been in place.

This boundedness does not mean that findings cannot be generalized beyond the limits of the specific conditions under which the study was conducted (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Thus, this study brings findings from the Danish context into dialogue with theories and findings derived from diverse contexts. This allows me to identify patterns that emerge across different context while also identifying variations specific to the Danish context and the Parallel Society Act in particular (Blatter & Haverland, 2014).



*Figure 5: Newbuild private rentals next to existing non-profit housing units. Tingbjerg, 2022. Photos by the author.*

## CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY OF PAPERS

This chapter summarizes the findings of the three journal papers included in this dissertation. All three papers contribute to answering the overall research question of the study: *How do practitioners address urban social sustainability in the planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations?* Furthermore, each paper is devoted primarily to answering one of the three underlying research questions. Table 5 provides an overview of the papers:

*Table 5: Overview of papers*

	<b>Paper 1</b>	<b>Paper 2</b>	<b>Paper 3</b>
Title	Bringing social sustainability into the mix: framing planning dilemmas in mixed-tenure regeneration	Community involvement in mixed-income transformation in Copenhagen, Denmark	What's community got to do with it? (De)coupling urban planning and community work in mixed-income transformation
Co-author	Marie Stender	Mark L. Joseph	-
Journal	Building Research & Information (published)	Journal of Urban Affairs (resubmitted after review)	Nordic Journal of Urban Studies (resubmitted after review)
Research question	How may social sustainability as an analytical framework contribute to the understanding of the planning dilemmas embedded in mixed-income transformation?	What role does community involvement play in mixed-income transformations and what are the facilitators and barriers?	How do planners and community workers collaborate on mixed-income transformation in marginalized neighborhoods and which factors enable and impede collaboration?

### 5.1. PAPER 1: BRINGING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY INTO THE MIX: FRAMING PLANNING DILEMMAS IN MIXED-TENURE REGENERATION

The first paper, written with Marie Stender, examines how urban practitioners perceive and approach mixed-income transformation, including what they perceive as desirable outcomes, how they see transformations affecting the targeted

neighborhoods, what challenges they expect to arise during the process, and how they plan to address these challenges. The paper applies the social sustainability framework as a lens for understanding the different aspects of mixed-income transformation and the dilemmas that practitioners face when trying to serve different agendas and objectives.

While this dissertation generally uses the term “mixed-income transformation”, Paper 1 uses the term “mixed-tenure regeneration”. This change in terminology should not confuse the reader. Though the two terms refer to different aspects of transformations – mixed-tenure referring to the mix of different housing tenures versus mixed-income referring to the mix of different income groups – I use the two terms interchangeably. The same applies when referring to “regeneration” versus “transformation”. When “mixed-tenure regeneration” is preferred in Paper 1, it is mainly because it reflects the terminology of the journal in which it is published.

Paper 1 raises the question: *How may social sustainability as an analytical framework contribute to the understanding of the planning dilemmas embedded in mixed-income transformation?* The paper finds that the concept of social sustainability helps frame planning dilemmas by highlighting issues of equity, community cohesion, and participation. In terms of equity, the paper found that practitioners often find themselves in dilemmas between serving investors and attracting high-income newcomers on the one hand and pursuing equitable outcomes for low-income non-profit housing tenants on the other hand. These dilemmas tended to play out in favor of investors and newcomers. Yet, the paper also finds that practitioners tend to see the transformation of the targeted estates as advancing low-income residents’ life-chances in the long-term by correcting what is perceived as mistaken and failed planning and designs. Furthermore, practitioners perceived the concentration of low-income and ethnic-minority groups in the estates as detrimental to social equity as it was perceived to contribute to the isolation of residents and to have a negative effect on their quality of life, particularly among children and youth.

In terms of community cohesion, the paper finds that practitioners were intent on the idea that mixed-income transformations should lead to socially cohesive communities. However, practitioners remained hesitant both regarding the feasibility of genuine social integration across tenure-divides and regarding the question of how community cohesion should be addressed. In particular, planners and urban developers tended to favor facilitating cohesion by shaping the built environment, e.g., by providing community rooms, sports facilities, and other platforms for social interaction, rather than engaging directly in social activities to promote cross-tenure interaction. Community workers and other stakeholders with experience in facilitating social activities were generally excluded from the planning process.

In terms of participation, the paper finds that participatory processes were downplayed by practitioners, who focused more on top-down strategic planning and professional

expertise. This was partially because practitioners found that the redevelopment necessary to transform the estates called for strategic long-sightedness and urban planning expertise rather than resident input and support and partially because practitioners did not perceive residents as willing or capable of contributing to the transformation.

## **5.2. PAPER 2: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN MIXED-INCOME TRANSFORMATION IN COPENHAGEN, DENMARK**

Paper 2, written with Mark L. Joseph, examines the use of community involvement in mixed-income transformation. Arguing that community involvement is crucial for resolving conflicts in urban planning and designing equitable solutions, the paper explores the implications of the tenant democracy system and non-profit housing sector self-governance on community involvement in mixed-income transformation under the Parallel Society Act. By doing so, it draws on my field work in the non-profit housing estate, Tingbjerg, in Copenhagen, Denmark. It raises the question: *What role does community involvement play in mixed-income transformations and what are the facilitators and barriers?*

The paper introduces a theoretical framework that identifies three major barriers to community involvement in mixed-income projects: 1) reluctance of powerful stakeholders to allocate time and resources for community input; 2) risks of engagement fatigue among residents due to the complexity and protracted nature of transformation processes; and 3) the risk of conflicting interests among diverse resident subgroups with varying capacity to engage potentially exacerbating social inequalities.

The paper finds that the institutions of associational tenant democracy in the Danish non-profit housing sector may have strengthened the commitment of powerful stakeholders to community involvement while also providing an institutional infrastructure for residents to sustain involvement over time. Nonetheless there are serious challenges to community involvement in mixed-income transformation even in a context of institutionalized tenant democracy. Thus, the level of influence hinges on professional stakeholders, acting as gatekeepers in the planning and implementation process, particularly the non-profit housing associations and their planning teams. The study highlights a tension between the high ambitions of involving the community and the practical constraints of time and resources. While there was an initial intent to involve residents, the complex and time-consuming nature of the project (coupled with other pressing tasks) led to sidelining and deprioritizing community involvement in favor of addressing more immediate project management challenges.

Residents' reactions to community involvement activities were often characterized by frustration, as they perceived such activities to be tokenistic and lacking in real influence. Engagement fatigue was also a concern with many residents finding it challenging to comprehend complex and lengthy planning processes.

Tenant democracy played an ambiguous role in community involvement. On one hand, it offered a formal platform for tenant representation for a small, selected group of residents. On the other hand, influence was highly exclusive with tenants outside of the established system being positioned in a reactive and obstructive position with little creative potential. Furthermore, the tenant democracy itself to some extent impeded wider community involvement, as tenant boards were perceived as an obstacle for direct participatory processes.

The study suggests that tenant democracy, while providing some infrastructure for community involvement, needs to include a broader range of participatory formats to ensure more inclusive community involvement. Furthermore, there is a need to address the power dynamics between stakeholders in order to avoid professional stakeholders steering involvement processes, to address challenges related to time and resource constraints, and to balance the interests of diverse resident groups.

### **5.3. PAPER 3: WHAT'S COMMUNITY GOT TO DO WITH IT? (DE)COUPLING URBAN PLANNING AND COMMUNITY WORK IN MIXED-INCOME TRANSFORMATION**

Paper 3 addresses cross-sector collaboration between planners and community workers in mixed-income transformation. Thus, while mixed-income transformations have been criticized for an overemphasis on physical aspects and a neglect of social processes such as social interaction and community cohesion, the paper proposes cross-sector collaboration between urban planners and community workers as a way to create more comprehensive redevelopment strategies that couple the social and physical dimensions of neighborhood redevelopment. The paper asks the research question: *How do planners and community workers collaborate on mixed-income transformation in marginalized neighborhoods and which factors enable and impede collaboration?*

The study uses data generated through field work in the non-profit housing estate Tingbjerg in Copenhagen, Denmark to examine an empirical case of cross-sector collaboration during a mixed-income transformation project and uses network governance theory as its framework. It explores the challenges and opportunities presented by collaboration between planners and community workers.



The paper finds that while both planners and community workers share a vision of sustainable neighborhood transformation, they are often governed by performance metrics that reinforce the separation of planning and community work into distinct pillars. Furthermore, the paper finds that decision-makers did not support cross-sector collaboration, nor did they provide the necessary facilitation for effective collaboration to emerge. The findings fall under four headings that are guided by theories of cross-sector collaboration:

First, in terms of *initial drivers and linking mechanisms* for collaboration to emerge, the study finds that while planners and community workers are guided by similar vision statements about neighborhood transformation, their performance metrics significantly differ. Planners were guided by performance metrics emphasizing physical redevelopment and policy-related outcomes, while community workers focused on social outcomes, specifically for non-profit housing tenants. This disparity in performance metrics set the stage for potential collaborative challenges.

Second, in terms of *leadership*, planners and community workers were organized into separate pillars with separate management structures. While collaboration was deemed important by management, a shortage of resources as well as concerns about relinquishing autonomy by entering into collaborative processes hampered effective cross-sector collaboration.

Third, despite these challenges, the paper finds that a number of *collaborative structures and processes* eventually emerged due to interdependencies and overlapping projects. However, the paper also finds that these collaborative processes were challenged by the dominance of the planning side at the expense of community work. Thus, collaborative processes were lacking in inclusivity, reciprocity, and mutual trust, which in turn impeded effective collaboration.

Finally, the paper finds that *endemic conflicts and tensions* arose. Conflicts stemmed from differing institutional logics and perspectives on community work and urban planning. Trust issues, reluctance to share power, and professional boundaries further complicated collaboration.

In conclusion, the paper underscores the importance of commitment to social inclusion and community building in mixed-income transformations and suggests that designing performance metrics to hold stakeholders accountable for both physical and social outcomes may enhance collaboration. It also highlights the challenge of aligning bottom-up community work with top-down planning and the need to address conflicts and tensions constructively. Finally, the paper emphasizes the significance of removing silos that separate social and physical redevelopment efforts.



*Figure 6: Courtyard meetings. Planners informing residents about upcoming infill construction. Tingbjerg, 2021. Photos by the author.*

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, I will discuss the combined findings of the three journal papers and extract and elaborate on the main insights generated. The chapter, then, integrates the three papers into a coherent, cross-cutting discussion. Furthermore, the chapter aims to answer the research questions posed in section 1.3 (“Research questions”) including the overall research question: *How do practitioners address urban social sustainability in planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations?*

Though the discussion draws primarily on the three journal papers, I have chosen to also include quotes and empirical examples not included in the papers. The aim is not to raise new themes or discussions not already included in the papers but to support and elaborate on the findings in ways that the confined journal paper formats have not allowed.

In the discussion, I will argue that mixed-income transformations in Denmark under the Parallel Society Act have essentially been framed in an urban strategic perspective. The urban strategic perspective sees concentrated disadvantage in marginalized neighborhoods as a consequence of the scale, design, layout, mono-tenure composition, and infrastructural isolation of large-scale post-war housing estates (Andersen et al., 2022). Therefore, the solution is framed as long-term, structural transformations of the design and planning of the estates from mono-tenure to tenure-mix, from isolation to urban integration, and from marginalized housing estates to attractive mixed-use neighborhoods.

The dominance of the urban strategic perspective means that transformation projects are mainly guided by a long-term focus on reshaping the built environment and attracting investments while the short-term consequences for current residents slip into the background. This manifests itself in the way practitioners address social sustainability in transformation planning and implementation. First, social sustainability is perceived as a long-term result of changes in the built environment turning estates into attractive neighborhoods. The perceived long-term sustainability, then, justifies potential harm inflicted on current residents in the short-term. Second, the transformations rely primarily on expert knowledge and strategic decision-making while everyday knowledge is disregarded. Hence, practitioners tend to downplay or neglect community involvement and resident influence. Third, while practitioners perceive community cohesion as integral to social sustainability, transformations primarily address community cohesion through the design of the built environment while community building activities are largely de-coupled from mixed-income transformation planning and implementation.

In this section, I first discuss the urban strategic perspective and its implications for the view on social sustainability in mixed-income transformation. Next, I turn to the role of project aims and objectives and how they are influenced by the urban strategic perspective. In the three following sections, I discuss the implications for social equity, community cohesion, and community involvement in mixed-income transformation planning and implementation. I conclude by answering the research questions, reflecting on the contribution of the study to the research on mixed-income transformations, and providing recommendations for mixed-income transformation policy and practice.

## **6.1. AN URBAN STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

When the Parallel Society Act was passed by Danish Parliament in 2018, mixed-income transformation became a prominent strategy to address concentrated disadvantage in marginalized non-profit housing estates<sup>13</sup>. The Parallel Society Act cemented and turned into policy a growing notion in the Danish planning debate that concentrated disadvantage in marginalized non-profit housing estates should be seen as a result of structural flaws in the built environment of post-war large-scale housing estates: lack of human scale, repetitive and alienating layout and architecture, mono-tenure housing composition, and infrastructural isolation from the surrounding cityscape (Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2017; 2019; Bjørn, 2008).

Thus, the Parallel Society Act represented a significant shift in the Danish approach to combatting concentrated disadvantage – from being a question of housing standard (which was addressed through refurbishments) and individual social hardship (which was addressed through social programs) to being a question of segregation on the housing market that needed to be addressed at the urban strategic level (Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2019). This also transformed the role of non-profit housing associations from being service organizations responsible for providing decent housing and basic social assistance for the least affluent to being an urban strategic actor (Olesen, 2023). The concept of ‘urban strategy’ is used here to denote a perspective on urban development that sees urban transformation and renewal as something that should be orchestrated by central planning actors through analyzing structural problems and potential, setting strategic transformation goals, aligning policies across different sectors, and bringing local transformation into a productive

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<sup>13</sup> Though mixed-income transformations were already underway in some housing estates at this point, including in Tingbjerg in Copenhagen, Gellerupparken in Aarhus, and Aalborg Øst (East) in Aalborg (Kjeldsen et al., 2019)

interplay with the development of the larger urban context (Kornberger, 2012; Olesen, 2023).

This particular framing of the problem of concentrated disadvantage, in turn, had implications to which solutions practitioners would turn. Thus, as Paper 1 indicates, many of the plans for transformation that non-profit housing associations and municipalities produced in the wake of the Parallel Society Act adopted the policy's perspective by essentially framing transformations as urban strategic projects aimed to revert "the mistakes of the past" (see also Woodcraft, 2020). Mixed-income transformations were framed as urban strategic endeavors aimed at contributing to a long-term transformation of the housing market under the ideology of "the mixed city" (Bjørn, 2008). Thus, transformation plans tended to focus on mixing the housing composition, breaking up scale and repetitive layouts into smaller, humanly scaled units, and integrating estates with the surrounding cityscape (Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2019). Non-profit housing de-concentration should make way for the construction of private rental and home-owner units. The aim was to attract a socially mixed resident base which, in turn, was believed to avert some of the social and neighborhood problems associated with concentrated disadvantage (Joseph et al., 2007).

The urban strategic approach does not mean that practitioners did not emphasize the social sustainability of neighborhood transformations. I found the opposite to be true. For example, Paper 1 demonstrates that planners and strategic decisionmakers perceived transformations as a necessary step to improving residents living conditions and life-chances in the long run. The infrastructural and social isolation of the estates, mono-tenure housing composition, and concentration of social problems was seen as impediments to residents' life chances. Creating mixed communities where, for example, schools would have a mix of pupils from different backgrounds, and where youth would experience more safety and better role-models, was perceived by practitioners as contributing to long-term social sustainability. However, stakeholders did not expect to see the results in terms of improved social outcomes for low-income residents for many years to come. As one director of a non-profit housing association said in one of my very first interviews:

"I think it is naïve to think that this is a quick fix. I believe (...) that the idea of the mixed city is correct. But it only works in the long term and may affect the children who are born here from 2020 on onwards, at least we must hope that it will". (Non-profit housing association director, 2020)

Thus, the turn to an urban strategic approach to concentrated disadvantage had implications for the way social sustainability was perceived and addressed in transformation planning and implementation. Socially sustainable outcomes were perceived to emerge in the long run as a result of changes in the neighborhood fabric brought on by urban strategic transformations. This is generally in line with social sustainability literature's focus on urban development taking the interests and well-

being of future generations into account (Darchen & Ladouceur, 2013; Dempsey et al., 2009). However, it fails to address the needs and aspirations of current residents and the potential harm inflicted upon them by transformation efforts.

Structural and strategic transformations were addressed primarily as top-down processes guided by professional planning expertise, while everyday knowledge and lived experiences of residents played a secondary role. The main emphasis was on planning and designing the built environment as a key to solving problems of concentrated disadvantage while the (potential) interplay between social and physical interventions was overlooked. Thus, coupling community work closer with transformation planning and implementation could potentially have strengthened the insights into communities' needs and aspirations, improved participatory practices to accommodate diverse groups of residents, and supplemented physical transformation with social and community-centered activities aimed to support the emergence of social interaction and community cohesion. These possibilities were largely ignored.

## **6.2. FRAMING TRANSFORMATION OBJECTIVES**

The urban strategic perspective has implications for the way transformation objectives are framed and thus how practitioners are governed and guided through transformation planning and implementation. Mixed-income transformations are complex processes that must simultaneously serve a number of different and often conflicting objectives. Meeting Parallel Society Act requirements represents one type of objective, but often stakeholders set local, contextual objectives such as providing “social cohesion”, “a vibrant and attractive family neighborhood,” (SAB/KAB et al., 2019) or that transformation should “take place in dialogue with the residents” (City of Copenhagen, 2022).

A general finding across the three papers is that practitioners were often positioned in planning dilemmas created by the latent conflicts between competing transformation objectives. For example, Paper 1 illustrates the intrinsic dilemmas that arise when transformation projects aim not only to attract and retain higher-income newcomers to the private rental and home-owner market but also to cater to existing non-profit housing tenants. Likewise, Paper 2 demonstrates the intrinsic conflicts between the purposes of garnering local support and involving residents while also streamlining processes and reducing complexity. These conflicting objectives tended to put practitioners in planning dilemmas that they needed to resolve to move implementation forward.

When different transformation objectives came into conflict with each other, practitioners drew on implicit or explicit goal hierarchies to balance and deal with planning dilemmas. I use the term ‘goal hierarchy’ to describe a situation where the

attainment of some goals is perceived as more urgent, important, or binding than others. While these hierarchies of goals were not necessarily explicitly framed, they manifested themselves in planning documents, interviews, and in the practices of different stakeholders. For example, Paper 3 illustrates how the commitment to complying with transformation plans deadlines while meeting the demands staked out in the Parallel Society Act – including the required maximum share of 40 pct. non-profit family housing while meeting the 2030 deadline – was perceived as binding. Compromising these objectives could ultimately put housing associations at risk of being put under administration.

Other objectives were seen as less binding. For example, Paper 2 finds that ‘getting the community on board’ and carrying out transformation in dialogue with residents was a value articulated among housing associations, city, and developers. What this should entail was never clarified nor operationalized, and no binding procedures, involvement plans, or organizational setup to support resident involvement in transformation processes were ever produced. Similarly, Paper 1 highlights that practitioners perceived social integration across socio-economic and tenure divides as an important transformation objective. However, what this entailed was never operationalized either as there were no attempts to monitor goal-attainment, and no accountability measures put in place. Thus, both community involvement and community cohesion were constructed as non-binding objectives that could easily be deprioritized and circumvented.

Often, goals that were perceived to be the most important were those that were specific and measurable, where goal-attainment was monitored, and where stakeholders were held accountable. Other objectives were perceived more as vision statements or long-term intentions. Often, the desired outcomes were not clearly defined, objectives were not binding, and goal-attainment was not monitored. Circling back to my operationalization of urban social sustainability – as urban development that promotes social equity, community cohesion, and participation – it is notable that no urban social sustainability measures were included as binding transformation objectives, no attempts were made to operationalize and monitor compliance with social sustainability measures, and no one was held accountable for delivering on these objectives. In other words, social equity, community cohesion, and participation were not clearly operationalized nor monitored.

This arguably reflects the urban strategic focus in the Parallel Society Act and in transformation planning – a focus on physical transformation of the built environment and changes in resident composition and ownership-structures rather than on what social outcomes the transformations aim to accomplish (Jackson, 2020). However, it also reflects the challenge of operationalizing and measuring urban social sustainability processes and outcomes (Janssen et al., 2021; Woodcraft, 2015). Thus, as discussed in section 3.1 (“Social sustainability literature”), social sustainability is a stretchy and shapeless concept which needs to be defined and operationalized in the

particular context in which it is applied. The study suggests that when stakeholders are not clear about what they perceive to be acceptable social outcomes, how they should be operationalized and monitored, and how they should be accomplished, social sustainability is likely to drift into the background in favor of more concrete and urgent objectives (Vifell & Soneryd, 2012).

In the following sections, I first discuss what implications the urban strategic approach and lack of operationalization of social sustainability outcomes had for the way practitioners addressed social equity, community involvement, and social cohesion in planning and implementation processes.

### **6.3. PROMOTING SOCIAL EQUITY**

Equity in urban social sustainability literature designates the way urban development promotes equal access to the city's benefits and opportunities for all (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). This includes the spatial distribution of goods and services and their accessibility for all segments of the population as well as social dynamics such as inclusion, non-discrimination, tolerance, and respect for social and cultural diversity (Darchen & Ladouceur, 2013; Dempsey et al., 2011; Pareja-Eastaway, 2012; Woodcraft, 2015).

Social mix literature demonstrates that mixed-income transformations are in many cases more harmful than helpful to existing low-income residents. For example, transformations tend to entail the replacement of symbols, places, and characteristics associated with the past. Hyra (2015) demonstrates how the replacement of symbols and amenities generates cultural displacement and leads to alienation and withdrawal in existing low-income residents. Furthermore, Chaskin and Joseph (2015) find that low-income residents are often excluded from using new amenities either due to high costs or because of privatization of public space. Arthurson et al. (2015a) demonstrates that planning and design often effectively prevent low-income renters from enjoying the opportunities that redeveloped estates offer. Furthermore, living in mixed-income communities, low-income residents are often politically marginalized and socially stigmatized by higher-income newcomers (Chaskin & Joseph, 2015; Lelévrier, 2013; Tersteeg & Pinkster, 2016). Meanwhile, existing low-income tenants have to endure the disadvantages of living in neighborhoods during the reconstruction phase, often being subjected to permanent or temporary displacement, and facing new and sometimes draconic eligibility and surveillance regimes that are often introduced in redeveloped estates (Bach, 2019b; Nielsen & Jepsen, 2020).

A key dilemma that stands out in the three papers, then, is the question of whom mixed-income transformation projects should serve (Poitras, 2009). Should it primarily cater to the existing community of non-profit housing tenants? Or should it



focus on attracting newcomers by primarily serving their interests? Thus, for low-income residents, urban transformations raise a range of pertinent questions and insecurities, for example: Will they be displaced? Will rent levels go up? And how will transformations impact their social lives and social networks? Furthermore, the notion of social equity also extends to residents' feelings of belonging, sense of place, and entitlement. Will low-income non-profit housing residents still have a legitimate place in the redeveloped neighborhoods? And will the qualities that low-income residents appreciate be preserved?

The papers suggest that the measures deemed necessary by planners and decisionmakers to succeed with urban strategic transformations may not align with what current residents prefer. For example, the planners I interviewed saw it as important in an urban strategic perspective to open up the infrastructure to allow more through-going traffic (Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2019). Yet, this was seen by many residents as a drawback, compromising the quiet and safe quality in their neighborhood. Likewise, planners saw strategic demolitions coupled with densification as the best solution in most cases. Yet, for residents this entailed displacement (for some), a denser and (in many residents' opinions) less attractive neighborhood, and a loss of scarce resources such as green areas and parking spaces. As one resident said to me:

“One time, I was offered an apartment in [an inner-city neighborhood]. Nice apartment but tell you what, the next house was so close I could look right in and see what they were doing. I mean, no thanks! It was claustrophobic!” (Resident, female, 2022)

While transformations may render estates more attractive and thus sustainable as seen from an urban strategic perspective, they also risk removing the qualities that current residents value that make them feel at home and give them a sense of place (Hyra, 2015). A general finding across the papers, then, is that the urban strategic emphasis on long-term transformations of the built environment at the expense of a focus on short-term social consequences for current residents has implications for the way practitioners address social sustainability in transformation planning and implementation. The perceived necessity of long-term strategic transformation justifies the potential harm inflicted on current residents in the targeted estates.

The existing community is often placed in a precarious position, as practitioners tend to see the concentration of poverty in and of itself as the main problem in marginalized housing estates. This easily leads to seeing low-income non-profit housing tenants – particularly those with social problems and/or minority background – as a problem, while white, middle-class newcomers represent the solution. This framing not only leads to feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement among non-profit housing tenants (Bucerius et al., 2017; Johansen & Jensen, 2017), it also encourages practitioners to see certain types of solutions. Thus, planning and implementation efforts tend to focus on getting more white, middle-class homeowners and private renters to choose this

particular estate instead of the other options open to them on the housing market. In the urban strategic perspective, then, the long-term vision of a mixed city tends to overshadow the short-term harm experienced by low-income residents here and now.

#### **6.4. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF RESIDENT INFLUENCE**

Participation in urban social sustainability literature refers to community involvement as well as community voice and influence on urban space development (Tunström, 2019; Woodcraft, 2015). Community involvement represents an integral component of socially sustainable urban development partly because it allows better planning by providing insights into community's needs and aspirations but primarily because it promotes a sustainable democratic form of sociality where affected parties are allowed to influence decisions that affect their lives (Davidson, 2019).

Residents have detailed everyday knowledge of what it is like to live on the estates. However, the urban strategic approach requires that transformation strategies and processes tend to rely primarily on expert knowledge and top-down strategic decision-making, while community involvement and resident influence is downplayed. Thus, this study suggests that there is a sort of epistemic hierarchy in place where professional expertise and the urban-strategic perspective on transformation is favored over lived experiences and everyday knowledge. Thurber et al. (2021), noting the same dynamics in their studies of US mixed-income transformations, frame this as an epistemic injustice in so far as it ignores “the knowledge, contributions, and desires of long-term residents – even as they remain in place – while legitimating their exclusion from participation (...)” (ibid., p. 31).

In this study, the epistemic hierarchy had implications for the way community voices and influence were included in transformation planning and implementation. On one level, practitioners were guided by planning ideals that prescribe community involvement as an integral part of socially sustainable urban development. Thus, Paper 1 and 2 find that community involvement represents an important and compelling planning ideal and also highlights practitioners' commitment to involving residents. Planning documents and political stakeholders furthermore stress the importance of being in dialogue with the community which, for example in the case of Tingbjerg was addressed by designating a team of planners to be responsible for this aspect. However, my findings also tell the story of involvement processes being confined, piloted, and turned into one-way dissemination of information while residents opt out, feel disregarded, and grasp for ways to channel their frustration and opposition.

The weak position of residents in the planning governance system contributes to the marginalization of community influence. Thus, the Parallel Society Act curbs the decision-making power of the main existing participatory structure, i.e., the tenant democracy. It enables authorities and housing associations to override tenant decisions and to pass and implement transformation plans without resident approval. Furthermore, no formal role of power was granted to local residents in the transformation planning and implementation such as representation on working groups, supervising committees etc. Governance structures were further complicated by the compartmentalization that participatory decision-making systems on the housing market tends to reproduce with divisions between the tenant democracy system, homeowners' associations, and in some cases associations for private renters.

Involvement processes were also challenged by the socially mixed resident composition consisting of a diverse pool of residents with different interests and abilities to participate (Agger, 2012; Ferilli et al., 2016). Thus, resident interviews (Paper 2) demonstrated that residents' interests and preferences vis-à-vis transformation projects were as mixed and heterogenous as residents themselves. Many residents were interested in housing security, i.e., not losing their unit and avoiding displacement or rent increase. Some were interested in preserving the community and existing qualities while others were interested in renewal and development. Some preferred the suburban qualities that characterized the estates pre-transformation (Bech-Danielsen & Stender, 2019), while others – particularly newcomers – favored a more urban and vibrant living environment. Most residents were interested in strengthening the community voice and influence thus giving residents more influence on transformation plans and trajectories.

Finally, community involvement processes seem to have been impeded by stakeholders not prioritizing the resources necessary to manage community involvement processes in a setting where effective involvement requires 1) tailoring participatory formats that enable residents with fewer resources and potential language skill barriers to effectively participate on their own terms, 2) aligning bottom-up processes and input with complex strategic transformation plans and objectives, and 3) managing the risks and uncertainties involved with sharing power with residents.

Thus, the study suggests that the urban strategic approach coupled with a legislation that de facto undermines residents' influence has favored an approach to mixed-income transformations that concentrates decision-making power with professional planners and urban strategists in the housing associations and their counterparts in the public and private sectors. Paper 2 finds that tenants will sometimes attempt to protest against this lack of community influence. However, tenants are easily locked into an unconstructive role as unruly political partisans or as unreasonable backbenchers and grumblers. To put residents in a more constructive and powerful position, then, the study suggests that more inclusive participatory formats need to be developed with a

focus on genuine resident influence, i.e., participatory formats that cater to diverse residents with different capacity to engage which bridge the divides between residents of different housing tenures.

## **6.5. ADDRESSING COMMUNITY COHESION THROUGH CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION**

Finally, community cohesion in the urban social sustainability literature refers to elements such as social networks, norms of reciprocity, solidarity, place identity, place attachment, and features of social organization (Murphy, 2012, p. 2). Community cohesion was highlighted by practitioners as an important transformation objective. Paper 1 finds that practitioners were aware of the risks of creating a neighborhood where the residents were divided between “us” and “them” along lines such as tenure, income, and race – something that social mix literature warns against (Chaskin & Joseph, 2011; 2015; Lelévrier, 2013). Yet, like social equity, community cohesion was not operationalized or monitored. Thus, what community cohesion entails in practice and how inclusive and cohesive communities may emerge appeared to be unclear and underdefined. As one strategic planner told me when asked about how the stakeholders were planning to promote inclusive social interaction in a socially mixed estate:

“We haven’t developed that yet (...). We know that we have a challenging task in front of us in terms of generating these social encounters across different resident groups. It may be through activities, it may be all sorts of thing. We have to find out”. (City planner, 2020)

In other words, planners were hesitant as to what exactly it would entail to address mixed-income community development in practice. The social sustainability literature suggests that urban development has both a physical and social dimension. A tangible and an intangible side (Woodcraft et al., 2012). From a practitioner perspective this translated into distinguishing between two different types of approaches: Hands-off and hands-on. Hands-off approaches entailed shaping the built environment in ways that were expected to promote the emergence of community cohesion. This included programming and designing buildings, infrastructure and urban spaces in ways that were expected to facilitate social interaction (Talen & Lee, 2018). Hands-on approaches, on the other hand, entailed facilitating social interaction and community building through social or participatory activities, where stakeholders would engage directly with residents.

The findings suggest that practitioners tended to primarily address community cohesion through hands-off approaches such as design the built environment while

hands-on community building activities were largely de-coupled from mixed-income transformation planning and implementation. Thus, efforts were primarily related to hands-off efforts, meaning that practitioners put efforts into shaping spaces and institutions that were intended to bring residents together. Yet, how social dynamics eventually played out was largely left up to residents. In contrast, hands-on approaches did not generally play an integrated role in transformation planning and implementation. For example, when exploring the collaboration between planners and community workers, Paper 3 finds that social projects and community building activities played a very marginal role in transformation planning and implementation. Though various organizations engaged in community work were present in the targeted neighborhoods, decision-makers did not see these as relevant to addressing the social dimension.

Several impediments appear to curb the coupling of physical and social transformation efforts. First, as discussed above, the goals and objectives of mixed-income transformation did not bind or hold stakeholders accountable for addressing the social dimension of urban development. Therefore, what collaboration with community workers might bring to the table did not seem to be valued in mixed-income transformation planning and implementation. As stated in Paper 3, community workers may contribute to facilitating inclusive social and community building processes, tailoring inclusive community involvement formats, or soliciting bottom-up perspectives and insights about the local community. However, as I have discussed in this chapter, transformation planning and implementation tends to focus on built environment rather than social activities, on top-down planning rather than bottom-up perspectives, and on expert knowledge rather than community involvement. As one city planner reflected:

“You can clearly see that this is a technical and bureaucratic thing. It is not a social thing”. (City planner, 2022)

Furthermore, the urban strategic approach to mixed-income transformation puts planners in a gate-keeping position in transformation planning and implementation. It also establishes a hierarchy where physical transformation processes have priority over social and community development processes. As one community work program manager told me:

“They told me that the urban transformation is the principal thing. And community work, then... it’s kind of inferior. So, the urban transformation gets to deal with all the important stuff, and we get to deal with the ‘losers’ and the immigrants, so to speak” (Community work program manager)

Finally, risk aversion and aversion regarding complicating transformation planning and implementation by adding competing perspectives also impedes the cross-sector collaboration with community workers. Thus, community workers represented a competing approach with more emphasis on vulnerable and low-income residents and

bottom-up approaches (Read et al., 2022; Westin et al., 2021). Aligning these approaches with top-down strategic planning was perceived to add an unnecessary layer of risk and complexity, in turn calling for additional resources which were not perceived to be warranted by the potential gains. Organizational and structural impediments and silos furthermore reinforced these barriers, effectively hampering cross-sector collaboration.

## 6.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings of the three journal papers and elaborated on the main insights generated by the study. In this final section, I summarize the answers to the research questions, reflect on the contribution of the study to the research on mixed-income transformations, and provide recommendations for practice and research.

The overall research question posed in this study was: *“How do practitioners address urban social sustainability in planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations?”* The overall research question was operationalized in three sub-questions that framed the three papers:

1. *How may social sustainability as an analytical framework contribute to the understanding of the planning dilemmas embedded in mixed-income transformation?* (Paper 1)
2. *What role does community involvement play in mixed-income transformations and what are the facilitators and barriers?* (Paper 2)
3. *How do planners and community workers collaborate on mixed-income transformation in marginalized neighborhoods and which factors enable and impede collaboration?* (Paper 3)

I have argued that mixed-income transformations in Denmark under the Parallel Society Act have essentially been framed from an urban strategic perspective with emphasis on long-term, structural transformations of the design and planning of post-war large-scale non-profit housing estates from mono-tenure to tenure-mix, from isolation to urban integration, and from marginalized housing estates to attractive mixed-use neighborhoods. Transformation projects are mainly guided by a focus on reshaping the built environment and attracting investments, while the short-term social implications for current residents have slipped into the background.

The answers to the three sub-questions, which are provided in the papers, all reflect this overall framing of mixed-income transformations. In terms of the first question (*“how may social sustainability as an analytical framework contribute to the understanding of the planning dilemmas embedded in mixed-income*

*transformation?*”), paper 1 finds that the concept of social sustainability helps frame planning dilemmas by highlighting issues of equity, community cohesion, and participation. Yet, it also finds that practitioners faced planning dilemmas on each of these dimensions. In terms of equity, practitioners faced dilemmas between serving investors and attracting high-income newcomers on the one hand and pursuing equitable outcomes for low-income non-profit housing tenants on the other hand. In terms of community cohesion, planning dilemmas were related to the use of hands-on community development approaches (drawing on, e.g., collaboration with community workers) and hands-off approaches that focused on shaping the built environment. In terms of participation, practitioners faced dilemmas between expert-driven approaches and bottom-up community involvement. The concept of social sustainability contributed by highlighting the implications of the urban strategic perspective which manifested itself in the priority of attracting newcomers over catering to existing residents, a dominant focus on strategic transformations of the built environment over social and community building efforts, and the dominance of expert-knowledge over resident perspectives.

In terms of the second sub-question (*“what role does community involvement play in mixed-income transformations and what are the facilitators and barriers?”*), paper 2 finds that community involvement may play some role in mixed-income transformation in a Danish non-profit housing context due to the institutions and traditions undergirding the resident democracy system, which may enable tenants to mobilize and sustain involvement. However, the paper also finds that there are serious challenges to community involvement with professional stakeholders being prone to exclude residents from the planning process and to limit and steer involvement into confined formats. Furthermore, the constraints of time and resources easily lead to deprioritizing community involvement in favor of addressing more immediate project management challenges and pursuing more pertinent strategic objectives.

Finally, in terms of the third sub-question (*“how do planners and community workers collaborate on mixed-income transformation in marginalized neighborhoods and which factors enable and impede collaboration?”*), paper 3 finds that the collaboration between planners and community workers was challenged by divergent performance metrics that reinforced the separation of planning and community work into distinct pillars. Furthermore, the paper finds that decision-makers did not support cross-sector collaboration, nor did they provide the necessary facilitation for effective collaboration to emerge. It highlights the challenges of aligning bottom-up community work with top-down planning and the need to address conflicts and tensions constructively while removing silos that separate social and physical redevelopment efforts.

These conclusions, in turn, all have implications for the overall research question, *“how do practitioners address urban social sustainability in planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations?”*. The findings across the three

papers suggest that practitioners' approach to social sustainability in mixed-income transformations was challenged by dilemmas on at least four dimensions: The temporal, epistemic, governance, and collaborative.

**First**, there were dilemmas associated with the temporal dimension as practitioners grappled with the challenges of balancing short-term and long-term social sustainability. How should the living conditions and life-chances for existing residents on the short term be balanced against the long-term objective of making neighborhoods more attractive and well-functioning? While the social sustainability framework speaks of sustainability for current and future generations alike, what should planners do if the two are perceived to be incommensurable? The findings suggest that the urban strategic perspective that dominated transformation strategies tended to favor long-term over short-term social sustainability. Thus, practitioners were generally committed to pursuing long-term objectives associated with the creation of an "attractive neighborhood", i.e., rebalancing the tenure-mix, improving neighborhood amenities, and integrating the neighborhood in the surrounding cityscape. Meanwhile, the potential implications for current residents in the short-term were less important to the way practitioners addressed social sustainability. From the urban strategic perspective, current low-income residents were not necessarily the main intended beneficiaries of the transformations. Thus, harms inflicted on current residents on the short term are justified by the objective of making neighborhoods more socially sustainable in the long run.

**Second**, there were dilemmas associated with the epistemic level in terms of competing forms of knowledge. Should social sustainability be addressed based on expert-knowledge or should it factor in the everyday-experiences of people living in the targeted neighborhoods? The papers find that technical and expert knowledge tended to dominate the planning and implementation process with less emphasis being put on laymen perspectives and everyday knowledge. From the expert perspective, transformations were perceived to promote social sustainability by making neighborhoods more attractive, more socially mixed, improving services and amenities, and by removing stigma. On the other hand, interviews with residents revealed another perspective on social sustainability. Non-profit housing tenants did not necessarily see transformation improving their quality of life or their opportunities. To many existing residents, their neighborhood was already perceived as beautiful, peaceful, safe, and homely.

**Third**, the dominance of expert knowledge on the epistemic had implications for the governance level. The papers find that mixed-income transformation planning and implementation was often caught in a dilemma between community involvement and top-down management. From a social sustainability perspective, community involvement contributes to planning that is in tune with community needs and aspirations while also serving social justice and democratic purposes by allowing those who are affected by planning decisions to participate in the decision-making.



However, while community involvement represented a strong vocational ideal among planners, there was a dilemma between inviting community perspectives and bottom-up governance on the one hand, and on the other hand the perceived need to control and steer transformation planning and implementation in order to comply with urban strategies. As involvement was framed as a less binding objective than keeping transformations under control and on track – and since community input was rendered less important than professional expertise anyway – practitioners tended to deprioritize and steer community involvement processes into confined formats with limited resident impact on transformation planning and implementation.

**Fourth**, there was a dilemma on the collaborative level between addressing community cohesion through cross-sectoral collaborative approaches and the aversion to power-sharing and distributed leadership. While practitioners were committed to addressing perceived challenges related to the creation of cross-tenure interaction and community cohesion, key planning stakeholders were reluctant to include community workers in the transformation process. First, community workers were perceived to have other perspectives on neighborhood transformation that potentially conflicted with the urban strategic agenda. Second, organizational and financial silos impeded collaboration. Third, the potential gains of cross-sector collaboration were perceived to be limited as meeting project objectives did not necessitate collaboration. Consequently, leaders did not see an incentive to allocate the necessary resources to overcome said obstacles and facilitate collaborative processes. Instead, community cohesion was mainly addressed through hands-off approaches focusing on designing the built environment in ways that were expected to facilitate social interaction. Community workers were to a large extent excluded from contributing to the transformation process.

### 6.6.1. CONTRIBUTION

This study aimed to contribute to the literature on mixed-income transformations by adding to the understanding of the role that urban social sustainability plays in the practice of planning and implementing mixed-income transformations. It has done so by analyzing the way practitioners address social sustainability in the planning and implementation of mixed-income transformations through the combined lenses of three streams of literature: Urban social sustainability literature, social mix literature, and network governance literature.

The study suggests that the urban social sustainability literature should focus more on the short-term consequences of urban transformations in addition to the focus in the literature on the creation of livable and sustainable urban spaces in the long run. The study illustrates that the transformation of urban space has significant social consequences in the short-term for the people inhabiting those spaces. It also shows

that there may sometimes be a tradeoff between short-term harms and long-term improvements. Social sustainability literature could develop a clearer conceptualization of this tradeoff and its implication for socially sustainable urban planning.

This study furthermore suggests that despite the advantages that flexibility and adaptability lend to the concept of social sustainability, more emphasis needs to be placed on how social sustainability should be operationalized in local contexts. Thus, the study demonstrates that without concrete operationalization, the social sustainability agenda tends to remain non-binding to local stakeholders and hampers the implementation of effective social accountability measures. Thus, the study indicates that there is a pertinent need for developing more comprehensive performance measurements for urban redevelopment processes that encompass a wider range of outcomes, including both physical and social dimensions.

The study also advocates for a more precise and elaborate conceptualization of the social dimension in urban social sustainability. Thus, there is a need for social sustainability research to transcend disciplinary boundaries and provide a more encompassing framework for understanding the underlying social processes of urban transformations. Still, the concept of urban social sustainability remains rooted in the planning literature, meaning that its implications for planning tend to favor physical efforts rather than social or community development practices.

Turning to the social mix literature, this dissertation contributes by highlighting the importance of focusing on transformation planning and implementation rather than primarily focusing on transformation outcomes. Thus, the study contributes by exploring the significant impact of the agency of practitioners and decision-makers in translating mixed-income policies into built and social reality. By analyzing the dilemmas that mixed-income transformations pose for practitioners and the rationales that guide practitioners when dealing with these dilemmas, the study contributes to the understanding of the factors that shape mixed-income transformation.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the social mix literature by examining the heuristic contribution of applying urban social sustainability and network governance literature as conceptual and theoretical lenses for analyzing and understanding mixed-income transformation planning and implementation. Finally, the study also adds to network governance literature by examining the barriers to reaping the benefits of cross-sector collaboration and network-based approaches to urban development.

## 6.6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to contribute to the practice field of mixed-income transformation planning and implementation by examining how these practices could potentially become more responsive to marginalized communities' voices, needs, and aspirations.

First, the study draws attention to the need to consider international experience with mixed-income transformation when applying the concept in a Danish context. The study suggests that reliance on urban strategy and mix of housing tenures in marginalized housing estates may be overoptimistic and may in some cases harm rather than help low-income and vulnerable resident groups.

Concordantly, mixed-income transformation projects should devote more resources to defining and operationalizing intended social sustainability outcomes, including outcomes for current low-income non-profit housing tenants. Such goals could for example include questions such as: How many of the original residents should stay on the estate or return after redevelopment? What should happen to those who are displaced? How should we minimize nuisance and disadvantage for current residents? How satisfied should residents be with the transformation after redevelopment is over and how are we going to measure and follow-up? What goals do we have for cross-tenure interaction and community cohesion and how should we follow up? Operationalizing social sustainability outcomes, doing follow-ups, and holding stakeholders accountable may help strengthen the focus on the social implications of mixed-income transformations.

Process- and governance-oriented goals could furthermore be formulated for the planning and implementation process particularly in terms of community involvement. The introduction of procedural requirements to the level and forms of community involvement may go some way in granting residents more influence on the transformation of their living environments. Local stakeholders could also be more ambitious in the application of new forms of community involvement, including the tailoring of transformation governance structures with resident representation on multiple levels such as working groups, steering committees, and supervisory boards.

Finally, the study suggests that more could be done to integrate the physical and social dimension of mixed-income transformations. This may address some of the challenges to community cohesion identified in the international literature and strengthen both relational ties and knowledge of the community. Strengthening cross-sector collaboration in mixed-income transformations calls for more network-based governance structures with a higher degree of inclusiveness and distributed leadership. It also calls for openness to different perspectives in the planning process and allocation of resources to facilitate cross-sector collaboration processes.

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# APPENDICES

## List of appendices

Appendix A. Interview guide, stakeholders

Appendix B. Interview guide, residents

Appendix C. Paper 1: Lasse Kjeldsen & Marie Stender (2022). Bringing social sustainability into the mix: framing planning dilemmas in mixed-tenure regeneration, *Building Research & Information*, 50:7, 709-721, DOI: 10.1080/09613218.2022.2081120

Appendix D. Paper 2: Lasse Kjeldsen & Mark L. Joseph (2023). Community involvement in mixed-income regeneration in Copenhagen, Denmark. Re-submitted after review to *Journal of Urban Affairs*.

Appendix E. Paper 3: Lasse Kjeldsen (2023). What's community got to do with it? Re-submitted after review to *Nordic Journal of Urban Studies*.

Appendix F. Center for Urban Regeneration and Community Development (CFBU) report: <https://cfbu.dk/udgivelser/socialt-baeredygtig-udvikling-i-udsatte-omraader/>

All appendices are included here in English translation, except Appendix F, which is included in the original Danish language version.



# Appendix A. Interview guide, stakeholders

## Introduction

Would you like to start by telling us who you are and what you work with?

What is your role in relation to the development plan and the transformation project?

## Process

Can you describe the course of the transformation up to today?

- Which actors are involved when?
- What do the various actors do? What are their responsibilities?

Can you describe the process planned for the next period as much as possible?

- Which actors are involved when?
- What are the most important unknowns?

## Transformation objectives

How do you perceive the purpose of the Parallel Society Act?

- Do you see it as an (important) part of the objective to create socially mixed housing areas?

What do you see as the goal of the transformation of [the estate you are working in]?

- Do you see it as an (important) part of the goal that you have to create a socially mixed neighborhood?
- In what way mixed? On what parameters?
- Why is it important?
- What will come out of that mix?
- Is it part of your task to contribute to such a community?

How do you want to achieve a socially mixed residential area? What are the main instruments?

What consequences do you expect the instruments/efforts will have on the population composition in the area?

Is it important to you to allow vulnerable and low-income residents who live on the estate today to remain there in the future?

- Why?
- What do you do to support that purpose?

Is it enough that different social, cultural and ethnic groups live in the same area or must they interact with each other, form communities or the like?

- What are your ambitions for the social mix?
- What expectations do you have for the interaction across social and cultural divides?

### **The attractiveness of the area**

How should the area be made attractive to investors?

How do you parse the significance of the current composition of residents in relation to the attractiveness of the area for investors? Is it a barrier to attracting investment?

How do you perceive the current residents' attitude towards the changes?

- Are there differences between different resident groups?
- Will possible resistance among residents affect opportunities to attract investors?

### **The role of the community workers**

How do you perceive the role of community work programs in relation to the transformation?

- What can they contribute – if anything?
- How should they contribute / how should they be involved?
- How do you see the possibilities for strengthening the link between social work and physical planning? Do you have examples of concrete initiatives?

### **Social needs and aspirations in urban design**

In what way can social needs be incorporated into different phases of construction?

How are the needs and perspectives of vulnerable groups incorporated?

Who is responsible for ensuring that the perspective of vulnerable groups is represented in the construction process?

Can you give examples of the perspective of socially disadvantaged groups being included in planning and design?

- How is it going?
- Why did it happen?
- What came of it?
- What were the challenges?
- What worked well and why?

## Appendix B. Interview guide, residents

### Introduction

I work at Aalborg University and am conducting research in Tingbjerg. I'm interested in talking to you because you live in Tingbjerg, and I'd like to hear your thoughts on living here and your experiences with the changes happening in Tingbjerg.

Everything you share with me will be treated confidentially and anonymously. I will be recording the interview.

If there's anything you don't wish to answer, please let me know, and we can move on to another topic.

### Background

Could you start by telling me a bit about yourself?

- Your name, age, and what you do on a daily basis?
- Where do you live in Tingbjerg, and who do you live with?
- How long have you been living in Tingbjerg?

### Experience with living in Tingbjerg

- What are your thoughts on living in Tingbjerg?
- What aspects do you find positive?
- What things do you think could be improved?
- Are there any places in Tingbjerg that you enjoy using?
  - o Which ones?
  - o Why? How do you use those places?
- Are there any places you would like to use more?
  - o What would make you consider using these places more?
- Are there any aspects of Tingbjerg that you wish were different?
  - o What changes or improvements would you suggest?

### Changes in Tingbjerg

There are ongoing changes in Tingbjerg, including demolitions, new construction, and an influx of new residents. These changes may also impact the social life in the neighborhood.

- What are your thoughts on the ongoing changes in Tingbjerg?
- What do you see as positive? What concerns you? Why?
- How informed do you feel about what's happening?

- Would you like to be more informed?
- Are there specific things in Tingbjerg that you wish were different?
- If you could have influence on the changes in Tingbjerg, what would you like to change?

## **Involvement**

When major urban renewal and changes occur in a neighborhood, there is sometimes an effort to involve residents who live or will live in the area.

- What would you have said if someone had asked for your input on what should happen in Tingbjerg?
- Do you recall if people who live in Tingbjerg have been asked for their opinions on the development of Tingbjerg?
- In what ways has this happened? (List various forms of resident involvement)
  - o Public hearings related to the Local Plan (online, on Facebook)
  - o Meetings in communal spaces
  - o Neighborhood bazaar at the Cultural Center
  - o Youth workshop at the Cultural Center
  - o Dialogue meeting at the Cultural Center on May 24th
- What do you think about the way you've been involved in the urban development of Tingbjerg?
- How would you prefer to be involved?
- What challenges do you face in influencing the development of Tingbjerg?
  - In terms of physical development?
  - Regarding social aspects?
  - With regard to ongoing activities?
  - In your immediate surroundings, such as your building, courtyard, or garden?
- What opportunities do you see for influencing the development of Tingbjerg?
  - In terms of physical development?
  - Regarding social aspects?
  - With regard to ongoing activities?
  - In your immediate surroundings, such as your building, courtyard, or garden?

## **Points of contact**

There are various organizations and individuals present in Tingbjerg, many of whom are actively working here. If you wanted to discuss something you'd like to change, who would you reach out to?

- Why would you choose to talk to them?
- What do you appreciate about them?
- Are there others?

Do you know who is responsible for the urban development?

- Have you met any of them or do you know who they are?
- What are your thoughts about them, or what is your impression?

Do you occasionally meet with other Tingbjerg residents, perhaps for leisure activities or other reasons?

- Where do you meet, and what do you do?
- Who else is involved?
- Do you ever discuss the changes in Tingbjerg? What do people say?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

## SUMMARY

Across the Western world, mixed-income transformation policies have become a widespread strategy to transform marginalized housing estates. While the Danish non-profit housing sector has historically been shielded from such policies, this changed in 2018 when the Danish Parliament passed the Parallel Society Act. The policy mandates the transformation of selected housing estates into mixed neighborhoods while reducing non-profit family housing to 40 percent. This prompts the question of whether the negative consequences of such policies which have been observed in other contexts can be avoided in the Danish context and if transformations can be tailored to benefit both newcomers and existing low-income residents. In this context, the dissertation examines how planning and implementation practices address marginalized communities' voices, needs, and aspirations. Drawing on case-study research, the dissertation finds that mixed-income transformations are dominated by an urban strategic perspective which prioritizes long-term urban transformation aimed at reshaping the built environment and attracting investments while often overlooking the short-term consequences for current residents.