

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE HAMMARKULLEN

AN ANALYSIS OF HOW TO ACHIEVE
SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN PRACTICE



Göteborgs Stad
Angered

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INTRODUCTION

Within the field of urban development there is general agreement that social sustainability must be considered. However, it is not always clear how this is to be put into practice since social sustainability is a vague concept without any specific definition. This report was produced as a part of the project EU-GUGLE, with the purpose of analysing and discussing important factors for a socially sustainable development in the urban area of Hammarkullen in Gothenburg, as well as in the city as a whole.

EU-GUGLE is part of the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative of the European Commission. The project aims to generate methods and models for socially and environmentally sustainable renovation of post-war urban areas, adapted to local needs but also applicable to different contexts.

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WHAT DOES CURRENT RESEARCH SAY ABOUT SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY?

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a complex political vision that emphasises mutual dependency between people as well as between people and the environment. Its fundamental principle is justice: a socially sustainable development needs to consider the situation of today, the situation of tomorrow as well as the way there (Falkheden 2005:73). There is no commonly established definition of social sustainability. Instead the concept points out a direction linked to a certain set of ideas that need to be given place- and time-specific content (Gustavsson & Elander 2013, Olsson 2012). In addition to this it needs to be broken down into feasible measures developed with consideration to the local context and in dialogue with the people affected by the project (Gustavsson & Elander 2013).

To evaluate a specific action we must ask for *whom* it is socially sustainable, in what *time frame* and *where* (Gustavsson & Elander 2013:9). A single effort may not have the same outcome for everyone since different individuals, groups and inhabitants of different places have different needs, interests, desires and requests. For a diverse population there are no optimal solutions. An intersectional perspective can give us a better understanding of how different (groups of) people can be affected in different ways by the results of a project.

INTERSECTIONALITY is a concept that describes how different discriminating power structures act together and how power is connected to normative perceptions about gender, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, religion and functionality.
(de los Reyes 2005:233)

Social sustainability is often equated with welfare, here defined in terms of decreased health differences and economic equality. These are obviously crucial elements in a socially sustainable society, but factors related to physical environment and social justice must also be included. The design of the physical environment, social inclusion in the city, meeting the needs of different groups and participation and influence in urban planning are all essential factors for social

sustainability since they directly affect people's well-being and daily life. Since this project operates within the framework of urban development, the following discussion will focus on social sustainability in relation to the built environment, without neglecting the fact that several parallel processes need to collude to reach social sustainability.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Counteracting residential segregation is a national political aim, a budget objective in Gothenburg and essential to social sustainability in the context of urban development. A polarised city may result in increased tension in society at large as well as worsened living conditions for individuals in disadvantaged urban areas. The concept of residential segregation describes a (hierarchical) physical separation of different groups based on demography, socio-economy or ethnicity. Segregation is caused by unequal power structures in society and differences in opportunities and capacity for action (Holmqvist 2009:83). Residential segregation is often equated with ethnic segregation and there is a commonly held view that it is self-chosen. However, research shows the opposite – many of those who immigrated to Sweden would prefer to live in

ethnically mixed areas but are constrained by discriminating mechanisms on the housing market (Molina 2005:106–107).

According to research, the lack of an active housing policy has contributed to intensified residential segregation. Therefore both politicians and public and private agents on the housing market must take responsibility for what and for whom they build and how apartments are distributed (Elge 2009, Molina 2005). The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket) emphasises that certain parts of the city are developed at the expense of others: residential segregation is not only intensified by the fact that peripheral urban areas are neglected but also by spectacular housing projects in other parts of the city (Boverket 2009:44). A large number of the efforts made so far to counteract residential segregation have focused on social or physical measures in specific areas, yet there is little support for the ability of these kinds of efforts to decrease segregation. They may improve the housing environment and opportunities on an individual level but they do not address the relational character of segregation. If residential segregation is to be challenged it is therefore crucial to reduce differences between different urban areas (Boverket 2005:58–59, 71). Socially sustainable urban development needs to adopt a perspective that includes the city as a whole, work to break the

isolation of certain urban areas by complementary infrastructure and buildings, and eliminate barriers between areas of different status (Boverket 2009:37).

THREE CRITERIA THAT ACTIONS FOR INCREASED INTEGRATION NEED TO FULFILL:

1. THE POTENTIAL- AND CAUSE-RELATED CRITERIA

Actions or projects should involve different actors' experiences and capacities and work *with* rather than *for*. They should also focus on underlying causes rather than symptoms.

2. THE DOUBLE INTEGRATION CRITERIA

Actions should simultaneously support social integration as well as integration in social systems.

3. THE RELATIONAL CRITERIA

Actions should support integration of groups with different living conditions in different parts of the city and/or region.

(SKL 2012:28)

CAN MIXED HOUSING COUNTERACT RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION?

Diverse forms of tenure and mixed housing are often thought to result in a mixed composition of population in urban areas. It is therefore used as a recipe against residential segregation, and currently dominates the urban development discourse (Holmqvist

2009). Nevertheless, many researchers question whether mixed housing actually fulfils that purpose (SKL 2012:88, SLL 2006:47). Even if rental apartments are built in an area dominated by condos, the high rents make them far from accessible for everyone (SKL 2012:88). Transformations of rented flats into condos is another strategy that actually has increased segregation since these transformations usually occurred in the city centre (Holmqvist 2009:233).

Mixed housing as a strategy is further problematised by the fact that not all individuals have an actual choice on the housing market, but rather are restricted by discriminating structures. Residential segregation is to a great extent explained by the actions of socio-economically strong households since they are able to move according to their own preferences (Holmqvist 2009:251–252). To build condos as a complement in urban areas of low socio-economic status that are dominated by rental flats can result in an increased stability in the area, since households requesting other forms of tenure then are able to stay. However it does not necessarily lead to a mixed population since socio-economically strong households frequently chose *not* to move to these neighbourhoods in the first place.

MENTAL IMAGES OF “THE SUBURB”

In the Swedish urban hierarchy (central) mixed-use districts are at the top and the post-war suburbs are often seen as its counterpart (Bradley et al 2005:15). The categorisation of the city into inner city/suburb or centre/periphery consolidates boundaries and when the inner city constitutes norm and is given higher status a consequence is that other environments, such as the suburbs of the million programme, are classified as the “Other” or as “non-city” (Tunström 2009:165). This stigmatisation affects both the area itself and the people living there. Furthermore, segregation, poverty and insecurity are related to the “non-city” rather than to the urban environment in its entirety (Tunström 2009:160–161). The suburban areas must be looked upon *in its own right* rather than as an inferior kind of urbanity (Tunström 2009:165).

The characteristics of the million programme-suburbs often mentioned are division of functions and monotonous building stock with massive concrete dwellings. This discourse fails to mention both security as a result of separation of traffic, high housing standards and proximity to green areas, or the fact that only 55 percent of the housing stock built within the million programme were residential blocks (Bradley et al 2005:15, Molina 2005:105). Many of the inhabitants in the million programme areas do not

“If we wish to imagine the ideal future city or suburb, we cannot base it on the outmoded models of ideal cities or suburbs of the past. We have to look at the urban-suburban reality of the twenty-first century, and try to understand what forces created the suburbs of yesterday and today, to help inform how we might plan for tomorrow”.

(Planning researcher Stephen Marshall 2006, quoted in Tunström 2009:165)

recognise representations of their neighbourhoods. The question is thus whose city and whose idea of a good environment is highlighted?

Media has a great responsibility in the process where the suburb is defined in negative terms since their representations often are

uniform and without nuances. The Swedish million programme suburbs are affected by a “territorial stigmatisation process” where they are separated from the rest of the city and where the social and medial discourses create stereotypical images of the areas as well as their inhabitants (Sernhede 2006:94). The media portrays the suburbs as anonymous and alien and its architecture as inhuman. Describing the built environment as inhuman and problematic makes it possible to connect the same characteristics to the people living there (Ericsson 2000:68). Negative representations of the inhabitants may have direct damaging consequences such as

affected self-image (Tunström 2005:63). According to the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, physical and social actions in the suburbs need to be complemented by efforts that strive to change people's idea of stigmatised urban areas (Boverket 2005:56).

PARTICIPATION & INFLUENCE

According to the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, participation and influence by residents should be a fundamental premise in all urban development projects, rather than a sub-target among others. This is because of its contribution of important knowledge to planning and renewal processes (Boverket 2005:53). Participation in society creates social inclusion, but participation can also be seen in a power perspective – to allow citizens' direct influence on planning processes and decision making (Gustavsson & Elander 2013:49). Participation and dialogue can be arranged in a number of ways, for example through civil dialogue, partnership processes, involvement of school children, dialogue cafes, workshops, public forums, open-air meetings or home visits (Gustavsson & Elander 2013:50).



Sherry Arnstein's model LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: a tool for analyzing forms and effects of participation and influence. The different steps of the ladder show the extent of citizen influence.
(Gustavsson & Elander 2013:50)

Image from: https://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/conenv/envi1128/focus3/f3_t9_q44.htm

Dialogue does not necessarily lead to consensus but it is important to be explicit about the ability of participants to affect actual decisions in order to avoid misunderstandings and disappointment. It is also important to be aware of the fact that there is always a problem of representation in dialogue contexts – who can bring up their ideas or make their voice heard? Hence, it is crucial to actively try to reach out to groups of people who themselves do not take the initiative to participate. If not the risk is that participation is restricted to resourceful, well-educated, middle aged men (Göteborgs Stad 2014:3). In order to carry out dialogues on equal terms it is necessary to integrate an intersectional and norm-critical perspective through the entire process, to reflect upon which target

groups the project want to reach (adjust information, information channels, time and localisation etc.) and to design the actual realisation of the dialogue in a way that encourages as many as possible to make their voice heard, preferably through using several different dialogue methods (Göteborgs Stad 2014).

SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE RENOVATION OF THE MILLION PROGRAMME

A considerable number of the dwellings built within the million programme between 1965 and 1974 are currently in urgent need of extensive renovation. In 2009, public housing companies had renovated 20 percent of their housing stock from that period and around 300 000 apartments had yet to be restored (Westin 2013:14). An asset of the flats of the million programme is that the rents often are lower than in other parts of the city. Renovations often, particularly in bigger cities, result in massive rent increases. Necessary renovations should according to law be included in the rent, but housing companies often take the opportunity to carry through measures for increased standard when renovating, to be able to increase the rent.

Seen from a perspective of social sustainability it is a major problem that rents are increased to the same level as newly produced apartments since the implication is that people who cannot afford such rent increases are forced to move. Substantial rent increases in connection to renovations inevitably affects households with low socio-economic status. In addition to forced removals rent increases may result in overcrowded living conditions as well as increased public spending on social benefits. Neither consequences for individuals nor the social structure of the city are being considered; the fundamental and constitutional right to housing is endangered and the process may result in gentrification in specific neighborhoods as well as increased residential segregation in the city (Westin 2013:8).

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN A HAMMARKULLEN PERSPECTIVE

Hammarkullen is situated in the urban district of Angered in the north-eastern part of Gothenburg. It is one of the suburbs of the million programme and was built mainly between 1968 and 1970. It includes a variation of large scale residential buildings, 3-story buildings, small scale terraced houses and villas. Rental is the dominating form of tenure and rents are comparatively low. The rental stock consists mainly of two and three bedroom apartments. Overcrowded living conditions are a problem for many families, thus bigger apartments are required. Around 1000 dwellings, owned by both private and public housing companies, are in need of renovation. The local square holds a library, a public pool, a pizzeria and a small grocery store. The ground floor in one of the buildings at Bredfjällsgatan contains some additional small shops.

7945 people live in Hammarkullen (2012) of which 57 percent are born in another country than Sweden. The middle-range income and

level of education are lower while unemployment rates and the share of the population receiving social benefits are higher than the average numbers in Gothenburg (Göteborgs Stad 2013). The residents of Hammarkullen are to a large extent happy with their housing conditions and the area is ranked high in satisfaction surveys, although littering is a problem. In a survey measuring perceived security, residents ranked Hammarkullen as 3.4 on a scale of 5 (Larssen 2013).



Like many other areas built within the million programme Hammarkullen was from an early stage labelled as a low status neighbourhood, which led to a bad reputation and a widespread conception about both the physical place itself and the people living there as “problems”. These conceptions are reproduced daily by the

media and politicians as well as employees and residents of the city of Gothenburg. Residents in Hammarkullen testify to being disparaged and discriminated due to their address. In order to break the stigma and improve the opportunities for the residents it is therefore crucial to change mental images of Hammarkullen and make people perceive the area as an equal and integrated part of Gothenburg. From a centre/periphery perspective Hammarkullen is considered to be located far away from the centre. Many Gothenburgers have never visited the area, even though it is only a 14 minute tram ride from the Central Station, similar to Stigbergstorget which is considered a central part of Gothenburg. Thus Hammarkullen is not remotely located from a geographical perspective but is perceived that way in the public consciousness. An important aim is therefore to decrease the mental distance to Hammarkullen and increase the interaction with inhabitants in other urban districts.

In the project description of EU-GUGLE a number of challenges regarding the development of Hammarkullen have been identified, including finding ways and finance models to renovate the building stock without large rent increases, breaking the stigma of the area in order to make people want to stay even if they have the opportunity to move somewhere else, to find and add aesthetical qualities to the



HAMMARKULLEN FROM ABOVE

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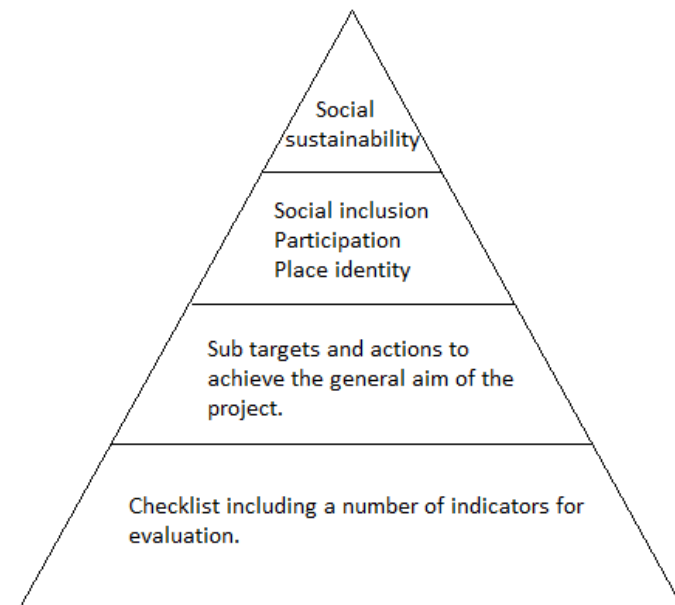
buildings and the outdoor areas and finally to find housing companies willing to invest and build new apartments in the area. The concept of social sustainability must be defined in a local perspective considering Hammarkullen's circumstances and qualities. The analysis of what is needed for socially sustainable development in Hammarkullen will therefore proceed from the challenges described above. It is crucial that specific proposals are produced in dialogue with the residents of Hammarkullen since they possess the necessary knowledge about the local situation and about local needs, interests and wishes. Even though this project is restricted to produce scenarios regarding the development *within* Hammarkullen, it simultaneously strives to find ways to encourage integration with other parts of the city. Efforts made within Hammarkullen will also contribute to the reduction of existing differences between different parts of the city.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN PRACTICE

METHODOLOGY

On behalf of The Delegation for Sustainable Cities, Gustavsson and Elander (2013:42–43) have constructed a model for analysis, evaluation and follow-up with the purpose to convert social sustainability into practice within urban planning and development projects. The model includes four different levels where *social sustainability* is found at the highest level. At the level below three topics have been developed, based on how social sustainability has been defined in a number of Swedish urban development projects as well as how it is commonly understood in academic literature. These topics are *social inclusion*, *participation* and *place identity*. Social inclusion consists of measures to facilitate participation in society and increase quality of life, while participation describes actual participation in planning processes and decision making. Place identity explains actions for strengthening existing identities or create new identities for cities or urban areas (Gustavsson & Elander 2013:44–57). At a third level the three topics are specified through

different sub-targets and actions to achieve the general aim of the project. Prioritized actions must be decided within every project, depending on its purpose. Listed actions and measures are to be used as a tool for decision making through the entire process.



PYRAMID OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
(Gustavsson & Elander 2013, adaption by the author)

At the forth level a checklist, including a number of indicators for evaluation, is designed in order to decide to what extent the purpose of the project has been achieved and also to develop methods and actions for future urban development projects

(Gustavsson & Elander 2013:43). Indicators should be used as an instrument for deliberation and discussion rather than pure measurements to avoid the focus on data collection to overshadow a deeper understanding of the results (Gustavsson & Elander 2013:73).

perspective in order to make visible potential consequences for different groups in society.

REALISATION

Several variables that are important to achieve social sustainability in a local context in Hammarkullen have been identified, based on the three topics *social inclusion*, *participation* and *place identity* (see Appendix 1). Following that, actions and measures important to achieve the same goal are discussed. It is important to point out that actions and measures are to be seen as a comprehensive strategy – more specific measures need to be developed in collaboration with residents of Hammarkullen. This is why the model's fourth level, with its indicators for evaluation, has not been realised in this report. Actions and measures have been analysed with consideration to the three criteria that actions for increased integration and social inclusion need to fulfill: the potential and cause-related criteria, the double integration criteria and the relational criteria (SKL 2012:28) as well as with an intersectional

SOCIAL INCLUSION

NEW MEETING PLACES

Since residential segregation is relational, actions focusing on one specific area do not counteract the fundamental problem of segregation – that individuals and groups of people in the city are spatially separated. To increase interaction with different parts of the city new meeting places are required in Hammarkullen. The public bath, *Hammarbadet*, is already an integrating factor, for one thing because of its swimming school with participants from different urban districts. The building is in need of renovation, and with extended or transformed activities the expectation is that interaction will further increase. It is imperative to identify the present shortcomings of the area; what are the needs, interests and wishes among for example inhabitants of different ages or amongst men and women? Providing facilities for



education, work, communities, organisations and cultural activities accessible for everyone is a crucial challenge.

PREVENT HOUSING SHORTAGE AND OVERCROWDED LIVING CONDITIONS

Housing shortage is a major problem in Gothenburg. This problem affects the residents of Hammarkullen to a great extent, both because of the large number of low-income households and because of discrimination on the housing market. For example, it is often very hard for young people to move away from their parents.

To prevent housing shortage a goal is to find housing companies willing to build in Hammarkullen. Within the EU-GUGLE project nothing will be built, but an ambition is to make the project result in a greater interest for Hammarkullen, and in that way make it a pilot area within social and environmentally sustainable urban development. Another problem in Hammarkullen is that

a large number of families are living in overcrowded conditions since there are few big apartments. When renovating and building it is hence crucial to respond to the need for bigger apartments. Another objective is to assure a housing stock with reasonable rent levels. Building new houses would also result in a growing population, creating increased demand for and supply of services in the area, for example a larger grocery store, which today is lacking.

PREVENT RENT INCREASES

In Hammarkullen income levels are lower and unemployment rates are higher than the average in Gothenburg. It is crucial that renovations do not result in substantial rent increases since many of the residents then would be forced to move and a gentrification process would start. Preventing rent increases is important due to the fundamental right to housing as well as the home as a solid foundation in life. Forced removals may have numerous negative consequences, for example for children having to change schools. Rent increases may also result in a larger number of families living in overcrowded conditions and increased public expenses on social benefits.

EFFORTS FOR INCREASED EMPLOYMENT

To strengthen social inclusion in Hammarkullen a priority should be to employ residents in the area both when renovating and building new housing, whether for work, internships or trainee positions. This can be realised by social clauses in public procurement. Unemployment rates are higher in Hammarkullen than the average in Gothenburg which means that many of the residents possess knowledge that today is not made use of. To offer residents employment is thus a way of making the most of people's potential. Discrimination on the labour market is a reason why unemployment rates are higher among certain groups in society. Compensation of this circumstance must be taken into consideration in recruitment processes.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

- NEW MEETING PLACES
- PREVENT HOUSING SHORTAGE AND OVERCROWDED LIVING CONDITIONS
- PREVENT RENT INCREASES
- EFFORTS FOR INCREASED EMPLOYMENT

PARTICIPATION

CONSIDER THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Considering the local conditions is significant for development in Hammarkullen. The residents themselves know best what is needed in their area. It is crucial to make use of local experiences and knowledge and cooperate with the residents of Hammarkullen. Because of the lack of knowledge about local wishes, needs and interests it is important to identify key persons within different organisations in Hammarkullen to make them contribute to a wider network of actors, who in turn can contribute important knowledge.



DIALOGUE & INFLUENCE

An essential factor for reaching social sustainability in all kinds of urban development projects is to include the residents. The people living in Hammarkullen must be given the opportunity to influence on issues regarding their living environment. When carrying out dialogues, residents must be involved at an early stage of the process. The actual level of influence on the current situation must be made clear, as well as ensuring that different proposals and ideas are understood as such, and not as settled decisions. Furthermore it is significant to adopt an intersectional perspective on dialogue processes as well as adjusting communication and realisation to reach and include groups that normally do not participate in such contexts.

PARTICIPATION

- CONSIDER THE LOCAL CONTEXT
- DIALOGUE & INFLUENCE

PLACE IDENTITY

ENHANCE AESTHETICAL QUALITIES

The architecture and surrounding environment of the million programme are today often considered problematic since they are assumed to generate negative consequences. Rather than considering the buildings and the environment as problems we have to proceed from Hammarkullen's local character and qualities and not hold the inner city as an ideal. The same requirements regarding aesthetic qualities should be demanded on what is built and renovated in Hammarkullen as in the city centre. The architecture ought to bring new values and simultaneously respect and preserve existing environments and qualities.

IMPROVE HOUSING ENVIRONMENT

To increase stability in the area and improve the daily life for residents it is important to make people want to stay in Hammarkullen. The motivation to move might decline if the physical environment is experienced as more enjoyable. In order to achieve this, outdoor areas should be made more welcoming to activities and recreation. New premises for both commercial and non-

commercial activities would lead to better service and increased movements in the area. The local square would benefit from a design that to a larger extent encourages encounters and interaction. Actions improving both environmental sustainability and general housing environment, such as "greenhouse balconies" and small-scale cultivation should be given priority. Concerned stakeholders must take responsibility for maintaining outdoor areas clean and for waste management. Green areas need to be taken care of properly to not generate feelings of insecurity, which primarily restrict women's movement patterns.



CHANGE MENTAL IMAGES OF HAMMARKULLEN

Since long ago Hammarkullen have been stigmatised and ascribed stereotypical qualities that do not correspond to reality but still are constantly reproduced. Negative characteristics that are assumed to be inherent to the physical environment are transferred to the residents, leading to damaging consequences. It is crucial to break the stigma and change people's mental images of Hammarkullen in order to increase life chances of the residents as well as the self-image of the area. It is the responsibility of media, politicians, individuals and employees in both private and public sector to consider in what terms they talk about Hammarkullen, what stories and images they choose to highlight and what stories they exclude. Another challenge is to bridge the mental distance between Hammarkullen and other parts of the city by counteracting the idea of Hammarkullen as peripheral. Improving the surrounding environment around the tram line could diminish the feeling of travelling through "no man's land" on the way to Hammarkullen.

STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS AND PATHS

The different areas of Angered are scattered like isolated islands in the district. Hammarkullen lacks obvious connections to

neighbouring areas.

To increase interaction with the surroundings and facilitate residents' participation in society connections needs to be



strengthened. The area between Hammarkullen and Angered Centrum must be developed in order to increase orientability and security and to support mobility of pedestrians and cyclists. As women, children and young people more often walk or travel by bike this would increase their access to services in Angered Centrum. Furthermore, certain paths within Hammarkullen need to be strengthened to increase integration between the different sub-areas.

PLACE IDENTITY

- ENHANCE AESTHETICAL QUALITIES
- IMPROVE HOUSING ENVIRONMENT
- CHANGE MENTAL IMAGES OF HAMMARKULLEN
- STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS AND PATHS

APPENDIX 1.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN HAMMARKULLEN

SOCIAL INCLUSION

New meeting places

Prevent housing shortage and overcrowded living conditions

Prevent rent increases

Efforts for increased employment

PARTICIPATION

Consider the local context

Dialogue & influence

PLACE IDENTITY

Enhance aesthetical qualities

Improve housing environment

Change mental images of Hammarkullen

Strengthen connections and paths

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