

# New | Arrival Towns | Cities

## Lab 4 | Vällingby

Adapting the welfare state  
model to present needs. The  
ABC-Town in transition



The neighbourhood Atlantis, Vällingby Photo: Will Cousins, 2019

The present report is a documentation of the insights related to New Towns and migration from the two-day New Town Lab in Vällingby and it should be read within that context. The lab was the fourth of five events as part of the two-year project “New Towns Arrival Cities”, led by the Municipality of Nissewaard and coordinated by INTI, the International New Town Institute. European New Towns, built by the welfare state to accommodate growing urban populations, all share a social democratic background and planned nature; today, they all face similar challenges as they struggle to adapt to rapidly growing and diversifying populations.

The New Towns Arrival Cities project, funded by the European Union as part of its Europe for Citizens Programme, is a platform for knowledge exchange between six European New Towns and three research institutions on the topic of migration. It consists of five two-day “New Town Lab” events in five partner cities: Milton Keynes, UK (November 22-23, 2017), Sabaudia, Italy (May 16-17, 2018), Grand Paris Sud, France (October 17-18 2018), Vällingby, Sweden (December 12-13, 2018) and Nissewaard, The Netherlands (February 20-21-22, 2019).

The five chapters of the report reflect the main topics addressed in each of the project’s five New Towns Labs, with the aim of establishing a structure that would make the results of the five labs relevant to the other partner cities and easily comparable. Instead of offering definitive conclusions, the report presents the main challenges, insights, observations and questions that came out of the presentations and discussions, with the intention of providing a base for further investigation.

New Towns Arrival Cities project website:

<http://www.newtowninstitute.org/spip.php?rubrique149>

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### Credits

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## VÄLLINGBY An introduction

Vällingby was inaugurated in 1954. It was one of the satellite towns along the newly expanded subway line from Stockholm city centre to Hässelby in the westernmost part of the municipality. Vällingby was an ABC-town, which stood for *Arbete, Bostad, Centrum* (Work, Dwelling, Centre). The ABC model was developed from the concept *grannskapsenhet* or Neighbourhood Unit – an idea originating with the American planner Clarence Perry in the 1920s. Just as most modern New Towns the notion was that a good city should be based on semi self-sufficient neighbourhoods that each contained the very basic services needed for daily life within a walking distance. With dedicated schools, shops, post and bank offices, social services, and more, the neighbourhood unit would create a community and provide a sense of belonging and security for residents. The concept had previously been used to plan Årsta in southern Stockholm in the 1940s, and it was scaled-up and broadened in Vällingby, especially to expand the number of local employment opportunities. Vällingby was planned to accommodate between 25,000 and 30,000 inhabitants, who were imagined as socially and economically independent from central Stockholm and the surrounding urban areas.



Aerial view of Vällingby centre and surrounding dwellings, 1958. Taken by Oscar Bladh.  
Source: Stockholm City Museum.

## Planning concept

The three parts of A, B, and C are distinctly present in the town plan. Work (A, *arbete*) should be localized in close proximity to people's homes and the town centre, while two industrial zones were planned to the west and south. Workplaces should also be located in the centre. Besides the employment opportunities offered by the shops, restaurants, and various public institutions, offices were located above the stores and restaurants and in a few higher buildings. Dwellings (B, *bostäder*) were planned in a variety of typologies, from low-rise and high-rise multifamily apartment buildings, to single-family houses and row houses, all within the maximum distance of 800 meters from the centre. And finally, the centre (C, *centrum*) was located in the middle and provided commercial, cultural, social, recreational, and religious services and institutions. It also was intended to act as a hub for transportation, with a subway stop (30 min to Stockholm Central Station), bus station, and a large number of parking places located underneath and around the town square. Cars and buses were separated from pedestrians and cyclists. Within residential areas, cars were only allowed on one side of the buildings, while cycling and walking paths were generously provided throughout the town; they connected Vällingby to the nearby areas and to the centre of Stockholm.



Foto: Liljeroth, Erik

Nordiska museet

Historical image of Vällingby Centrum in the 1950s

Source: Nordiska Museet (ph. Erik Liljeroth)



Vällingby in Postcards

Source: Petronella Mill



Historical image of Vällingby Centrum in the 1950s

Source: Nordiska Museet (ph. Gunnar Lundh)



Vällingby was the result of the regional planning of greater Stockholm in the post-war period, which focused on decentralization and making room for the long-term growth of the city. The most important plan was the General Plan of 1952, developed by the City Planning Office and its director, Sven Markelius. Since the 19th century, the city had acquired larger land areas – sometimes from other municipalities – in order to expand its borders and keep control over the territory to secure the housing provision and the urban development schemes, which were necessary for the city to grow in a sustainable and inclusive way.

With a clear parallel to what we learned in the New Town of Spijkenisse in the Netherlands, the satellite towns of the so-called 'Vällingby Group' (*Vällingbygruppen*) were built along the western subway line. These satellite New Towns were planned to work as partially independent towns, each inventing its own life, while physically connected to the capital city via the *Tunnelbana*. Each of these stops was planned as a city centre on its own, only slightly differentiated by the weight given to the balance of A-B-C functions in the planning schemes, as described by Sven Markelius in 1952 during a conference in Lisbon *"the proximity of residence to the workplace must be considered as one of the most vital problems requiring solution and an important point is, therefore, to strive for a suitable balance between dwelling and workplace within a limited area"*.

While this principle naturally suggests a parallel with the French case of Evry, and the C-component (shopping and cultural centre as driving and structural function of the New Town) with the case of MK, Vällingby is characterized by a substantial difference which lays in the governance system structure; the New Town (like other Stockholm's satellite towns) maintains a strong administrative dependence to the decision-making level of the mother city's government. Contrarily, Milton Keynes and the French New Towns of Evry and Senart, or the above mentioned Nissewaard in the Rotterdam metropolitan region, all exist as a municipality on its own.

## Vällingby

The city of Stockholm is divided into 14 districts based on geographical area. Hässelby-Vällingby is one of the Western districts in the municipality. Hässelby-Vällingby has an area of 19,6 km<sup>2</sup> and comprises sub-districts such as Grimsta, Hässelby Gård (farm), Hässelby Strand (beach), Hässelby Villastad (villa town) Kälvesta, Nälsta, Räcksta, Vinsta and Vällingby. The abundance of green space and water also makes Hässelby-Vällingby distinct. For instance, Grimsta nature reserve, including Räcksta Träsk, is considered valuable for outdoor activities. A popular walking course runs along Lake Mälaren, which connects the seaside resorts of Canaan and Maltesholm. In these diverse and easily accessible green areas, there are good opportunities for both relaxation and exercise. Residents and visitors can walk in the woods, pick berries or mushrooms, ride, and swim. The Hässelby-Vällingby district administration is responsible for maintaining these areas, as well as providing certain municipal services. These include preschools, elderly care, support and service for people with disabilities, urban environmental work (such as the maintenance of parks), social psychiatry, individual and family care, consumer guidance to leisure and cultural activities.



The abundance of nature and green spaces (in Grimsta on the left) and apartment-houses in Hässelby Strand with view on the lake (right)

1 - From Sven Markelius: "Relation of dwelling type and plan to layout of residential quarter", in **the relation between dwelling type and plan and the layout of residential quarter**, Lissabon: International Congress for Housing and Planning XXI, 1952, p. 36.

This abundance of nature is indeed an asset for the district. These areas are being planned, designed, and maintained so that they complement each other and can handle an increased population without losing their value. Easy access to nature in different forms offers a number of proven positive health effects, which also make social and cultural integration easier. In many parts of the world, however, nature is dangerous and something to avoid. Therefore, it has been considered important to inform immigrants that Swedish nature is safe and a resource for everyday life. Thus, the Hässelby-Vällingby district has a unique chance to plan and design its parks and natural areas with the goal to remove barriers between different socioeconomic areas and to create spaces and places for spontaneous interaction between people with different backgrounds. This is producing positive effects in addition to more structural actions to counteract segregation and alienation among newcomers.

Like the other European cases explored in this journey across Europe, despite its relatively young life, Vällingby has gone through substantial changes which have shaped and molded it according to the pace of the socio-economic and political circumstances which have characterized the 20th century up to the present: *'Vällingby was created in the displacement from village to city, from privatised economy to collective state, from an old-fashioned country marked by farm society and agriculture to a modern welfare state, from the organically growing city to the planned society; the suburb Vällingby became the materialisation of the ideological hopes that anticipated and followed the transformation.'*<sup>2</sup>

## New arrivals and emerging needs

In order to help new arrivals to integrate into Swedish society and to facilitate use of national and municipal public services, newcomers are offered social guidance, access to cultural and sport activities, parental support, language lessons and services. During the summer of 2018, approximately 85 new arrivals have visited the Hässelby-Vällingby municipal offices and received support with respect to private financial matters, community orientation, and practical information. In order to assist newcomers living in temporary housing in finding long-term housing solutions, the municipal administration has offered the residents support in a variety of languages, including Persian, Somali, Arabic, and Tigrinya. Up to 46 new arrivals, of which 56% were women, received information about reliable websites that advertise apartments, how to write CVs and letters, as well as information about their rights and obligations when renting a home.

The participants were satisfied with this resident support, as expressed in the following quotes: *"I really needed to learn things that I never heard about"* and *"That information should be given to all as soon as you arrive"*.

## The Questions of the Lab

The New Town Lab in Vällingby investigated the transformations of the post-war built environment and its social milieus over time – from the so-called ABC-town of work-dwelling-centre (*arbete-bostad-centrum*) of the 1950s, to a town with a more diverse population and less workplaces in the 1980s, to the contemporary town characterized in part by international migration and with a revitalized centre. During the workshop, we looked at how the former structures of the mid-20th century Swedish welfare state are being used today, developed insights and analysed the emerging trends and responses in terms of services and action programmes. The lab has involved professionals, public actors, local associations' representatives and citizens. The questions of the lab could be summarized as follows:

*How can the urban infrastructures and facilities of the foundation time respond to the current societal need? How can they be transformed and adapted to the new context especially with respect to the radical changes which occurred in the demographic composition of the city?*

The 2-day programme proposed a reflection on the value of the A (work), B (dwelling), and C (centre) components and the way their perception has changed: *Are they still valid or have they become obsolete? Starting from their historical values, how can they be reconsidered in the light of the 21st century demand of a more socially and culturally diverse Sweden?*

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2 - Thomas Millroth & Per Skoglund: Vällingby en tidsbild av vikt. Stockholm: Almlöfs Förlag, 2004, p. 107. Quote from Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel', author: Signe Sophie Bøggild, p.188



# 1. Heritage & Culture

## The B-word. From heritage to today's housing challenge

### Challenges

The cultural dimension in the New Towns has often played a strategic role in the construction of a local identity where communities lack common roots and shared historical meanings. Vällingby is even more than that: it was most of all, a political project, the representation of the social democratic welfare state. The years after the second World War were defined as historical for several reasons: "Vällingby of 1954 was part and parcel of the expansionist political program of Folkshemmet (People's Home). Over a long period of Social Democratic hegemony, housing policies manifested as 'social engineering', associating urban planning and the design of dwellings with the creation of 'the good life' and the 'just society'."<sup>3</sup> The New Town Vällingby, embodying the political system, became the flagship of Sweden. In addition, an immense popular demand for change was on the rise, combined with increased expectations (economic, political and popular). The demand for an improved standard of living was urgent, because the housing conditions in the country were quite abominable, as the result of an unregulated market and indecent and over-crowded homes for the low-income classes.

The time was mature for experiments and innovative solutions<sup>4</sup> which led to the new planning paradigm of the 'ABC-Town'. As the flagship of this paradigm, Vällingby was appointed patrimony at the young age of 33 (1987). Today, at the age of 65, the city finds itself dealing again with a severe housing challenge which mainly requires convincing responses for refugees and asylum seekers.

After its inauguration, Vällingby was immediately recognized as an innovative form of planning and was publicized in articles appearing in numerous international architectural and planning magazines. Not only that, Swedish and international tourists – a broader public than the usual suspects of architects and historians - did sightseeing in the ABC-Town far into the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> The advertising and promotional dimension of the ABC-town created also new job opportunities for the recently mobilised local female workforce, which included also the possibility of a career as *Fröken Vällingby* (Miss Vällingby): hostesses in stewardess-like uniforms who were in charge of guiding groups of tourists around the 'City of the Future'.

One of the reasons for this intensive international interest was that it was regarded as one of the first towns built according to the new notion of the post-war New Towns, a planning concept that had primarily been defined by the British New Towns Act of 1947. Although Vällingby was based on the Swedish concept of the ABC-town, its planning and design reflected the approaches used in the early New Towns in the UK. The British connections were also explicit: the planning of Vällingby was conducted in parallel with the first British New Town of Stevenage, and the two planning teams exchanged knowledge and ideas in a "sister city" agreement (this arrangement was abandoned and forgotten after a few years).

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3 - 'Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel', author: Signe Sophie Bøggild, p.188

4 - 'While progressive modernist architects in most other countries worked from the margins during the pre-war period, Sweden made an exception. This was probably due to a rare ideological and aesthetical overlap between the Social Democratic Party in power and the socially engaged architects of Swedish Modernism. Sharing faith in progress and modernisation, architects sat at the negotiation table with politicians and vice versa at the drawing table. These parties became different limbs of the same bureaucratic system when avant-garde architects of the 1920s and 1930s were appointed city planners and functionaries of the large public building task of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, eventually materialising a new society.[...] As an example for all, in 1939, another CIAM member and glowing Social Democrat, Sven Markelius, was 1938-1944 head of building and planning investigation of the National Board of Public Building, and in 1944 he was made director of Stockholm's urban planning office.' Quote from 'Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel', author: Signe Sophie Bøggild, p.90

5 - 'Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel', author: Signe Sophie Bøggild, p. 176

One of the principal actors in the construction and management of the housing as well as of the Vällingby Centrum, was, and still is, the housing corporation Svenska Bostäder, founded in 1944. Owned by the City of Stockholm, this is one of Sweden's largest housing companies which has had an active role in the construction of Stockholm for 75 years by now.

In Vällingby, Svenska Bostäder has recently restored the façade of the iconic cinema Fontänen built in 1956 with an operation which, by completely transforming the inside (addition of several new screen-rooms) is unnoticeable from the outside.



Vällingby in Postcards: The Theater Fontänen.  
Source: Petronella Mill

In 2006, a new master plan for Vällingby was conceived by the City of Stockholm and in 2008, Vällingby Centrum was re-inaugurated. Re-baptised as Vällingby City, the new K5 retail store has become Vällingby's new landmark. Yet, Vällingby Centrum offers a spectrum of cultural facilities, such as a cinema, theatre, restaurants, shops and a church, whose infrastructures date back to the 1950s. By then the suburb was new and considered to be a highly modern phenomenon. Today they are still present and in use, however, as emphasized by Signe Sophie Bøggild, echoing an Indian say, they are "same same, but different".<sup>6</sup> And she explains: "while new cobblestones immaculately re-enact a 1950s geometrical pattern, the lower floor of the Edward Hopper-like restaurant Vällingehus is converted into a multi-ethnic food hall ranging from Lebanese to Thai. Between these contrasts, Vällingby's intimate and nationally listed community centre appears as a geological plate, rubbing between the Sweden of yesterday and the Sweden of tomorrow. Old New Town pioneers pulling suitcases on wheels, veiled women, playing children and busy shoppers, many of whom are carriers of traditional Swedish names such as Svensson, Jönsson and Andersson, mix moderately with counterparts with names like Khan, Osman and Hossein. Small-scale shops, the popular MacDonal'd's and the classic cinema Fontänen blend with public service anchors such as the assembly hall Trappan, the youth club Tegelhögen, the library, and the Saint Thomas Church".

As highlighted by Shane Downer (MK Council)<sup>7</sup> during the lab, the original architectural features of the listed patrimony of Vällingby Centrum, although partially renewed and transformed in terms of functionalities, can be valued as a way to **increase awareness among the new inhabitants** who have moved to the city in recent years and who might not be aware of the history behind the creation of such **identity buildings** and urban forms. This might contribute to make them proud of the city that has welcomed them and therefor make them part of its **historic iconic past** and an **active player in the city of tomorrow**.

6 - "Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel", author: Signe Sophie Bøggild p. 71

7 - MK Council has established a so called 'Conservation Team' working on the awareness and helping to understand the city heritage and the relation between the old and the new buildings.

Along the same line of thinking, the Hässelby-Vällinby district has commissioned a photographic research to explore the city's new hybrid culture which is to be detected and somewhere hidden within the welfare social and cultural infrastructure of the city of 1954. **"Hidden diversity"** was exhibited in the People House where the lab was held and portrayed the ongoing transition from the A-B-C town to the contemporary city demographic composition.



View on the central pedestrian areas of Vällingby-Centrum in December 2018; and the commercial area Vällingby -Centrum recently renovated on the right.  
Ph. Will Cousins

Recognized from the start as a concentration of experimental design planning and housing solutions, the 'ABC-Town' offered a multiple choice of housing typologies including tower blocks, 3 storey-houses, domino houses and row houses. Initiatives exploring high quality design models for affordable "pragmatic and 'sufficiently egalitarian' solution for families"<sup>8</sup>, became possible.

During her presentation, architect Anna Sundman explored the work of architects Höjer & Ljungqvist between the years 1950-70s, addressing the theme of the organized self-building. At that time a real community had developed around the **self-building homes** and inhabitants were not only consumers but also producers. Trying to diversify the housing offer in Vällingby and respond to the urgent housing needs, they proposed the construction of self-built family homes (row houses realized combining different types of standard modules) in the neighbourhood Atlantis (1952-1955), among others.

Behind the new self-built housing developments, there was the utopian spirit of the New Town of Vällingby, the ambition of being in the midst of creating a new society. A model for ideal communities was being tested, supported by a package of tools and special loans which also included the possibility for the residents to pay in workforce (they built in their own free time and weekends). Priority was given to families with children and works had to be realized with a quite high pace (9 months to build the house). The result was a low-cost solution with high quality standards, in terms of architectural spaces, and strong connection with the natural environment.



Row houses in the neighbourhood Atlantis, Vällinby.  
Ph. Will Cousins

8 - "Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel", author: Signe Sophie Bøggild p.162



**Standardized modules** were used and matched according to the individual requirements. **The political ambition of that time made this type of development become a reality.**

The prime minister Olof Palme (social democrat) himself moved into the neighbourhood (1968-1983) with his family, highly convinced of the role of such a strategy to respond to the housing crisis of that time. The neighbourhood Atlantis is now protected as cultural heritage.

Such democratic and community self-built approach can today be a source of inspiration when the city must provide a large number of affordable houses in a very short time. The housing challenge hit Sweden and the Capital City in particular. SHIS Bostäder's CEO Anders Kindberg put the accent on the figures: the housing queue today counts more than 500,000 people in need of a home.

SHIS is a municipal foundation established in 1963 by Stockholm city council with the purpose of reducing unhealthy homelessness in the city and help people back to the regular housing market. They are producing **temporary modular homes** that are meant to be in a place for a maximum of 15 years. In 2018, about 6100 people lived in the SHIS housing estates, of which 4100 were newcomers. As additional assignment SHIS supports the city by providing temporary housing for those newcomers allocated to the municipality in accordance with the new legislation 2016 related to the resettlement of newcomers.

The foundation helps the tenants with the relocation to permanent housing solutions, also through a cross sectoral "Boskola - housing and living school" including notions concerning the economic aspects (rent and payments' deadlines), the application for a permanent house, the connection to the labour market, the link between family and school, safety and security and the general rules of co-habitation, supporting the process of inclusion of newcomers in the local system.



The opening of temporary modular homes for newcomers in Stockholm in 2018.  
Source: presentation of the SHIS Bostäder during the Lab#4 in Vällinby in Dec 12-13, 2018

In 2015-2016, 2000 newcomers arrived in the Hässelby-Vällinby district. The demand for affordable housing (not enough provision in the existing market) challenges the A-B-C town again.

*Questions for further discussion:*

- *How can we understand housing and the concept of home in relation to migration and temporary forms of housing?*
- *How can new approaches and design solutions help to overcome segregation and create connections and solidarity between communities?*
- *How to produce affordable and high-quality housing?*

## 2. Public Space

### Green and blue networks as drivers of inclusion processes to overcome segregation and isolation

#### Challenges

As we learned during this Lab, the green areas were essential to achieve the seamless coherence of the A-B-C scheme. Similarly, in Evry and Milton Keynes, everything was planned to be at 'walking distance', approximately 1km radius from the Vällingby Centrum or the local district centres. More importantly, pedestrian or bicycle lanes were given priority over car traffic. *"According to the scale of the child, schools, playgrounds, shops and the Tunnelbana station are planned strictly for pedestrians. Meanwhile, park areas with playing fields and sports facilities are interconnected; [...] As far as possible, greeneries with pedestrian and bicycle paths run through the different neighbourhood units like an unbroken chain"*<sup>9</sup>.

Having inherited this spatial organisation, can the natural areas and the green-blue infrastructures also today become the drivers for social interaction between different groups and foster the construction of an inclusive society?

The importance of green networks for a sustainable urban development is on top of the agenda both in terms of Vällingby planning policies and actions fostering the promotion and the accessibility to the natural environment. However, safety and security seem to limit the exploitation of such resources. Green zones are perceived as dividing factors between the neighbourhoods, more than connecting elements for inclusive-community spaces.

Magnus Rydevik, Head of the Department of Urban Environment, stressed the potential of connecting neighbourhoods via the existing green infrastructures with increased social interaction and safety as important components of sustainable urban development. In doing so the Department has established a cross sectoral cooperation with the other departments (Traffic, Environment, Labour Market, Education, etc) in the framework of the comprehensive Plan for the City of Stockholm, whose main goals include being a growing city, a cohesive city, a climate smart and resilient city, equipped with good public spaces.

What emerges from the debate is that there are a lot of barriers which are not only physical such as tunnels, underpasses, dark spots, that make the users feel unsafe and therefore reluctant in using them; the mental obstacles might carry just as much weight.

The City districts points out the need for an increased social interaction between the different neighbourhoods, which are sometimes isolated and segregated. Even when distances are small, variations in terms of population's composition and incomes register relevant effects producing mental and cultural barriers between the communities, as pointed out by Stefan Bärlin, sustainability manager of the local football organization *Brommapojkarna* and by the founders of *Systrar rönt hornet* (Sisters around the corner).

They gave us a picture of the neighbourhoods of Hässelby-Villastad, Hässelby-Gård, Kalvestia and Smedshagen, nearby Vällingby Centrum: Hässelby-Villastad has 15% of its residents born abroad, 0.7% in need of financial support, while in Hässelby-Gård, 43% of the inhabitants is born abroad and 14% in need of financial support; 18% of the inhabitants of Kalvestia is born abroad and 0.5% is in need of financial support, while in Smedshagen 52% is born abroad and 15% in need of social support. Although only a couple of kilometers away from each other, there is no communication between those areas, and there are huge differences in the dominance of population born abroad combined with low-incomes.

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9 - "Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel", author: Signe Sophie Bøggild p.136

The local youth football club and the *Systrar rönt hornet* (Sisters around the corner) are active in the Vällingby area. Their actions are mostly directed to promote gender equality, promote cooperation between children from different schools and build confidence in the what is defined as 'other'.

In particular 'Sisters around the corner' is a non-profit organization founded by three Swedish born girls with an immigrant background who have created a support service/help point for young girls in the neighbourhood, who -like they did themselves in their adolescence- struggle with all kinds of life issues. While usually youth programmes are mostly addressed to boys, this is a specific programme for teenage girls. With a bottom-up approach, they operate on the ground, getting the trust and feelings of the youngsters and being able to contribute to the formulation of the real local questions.

They welcome the teenagers in a community space (owned by the municipality) with the aim to listen to their needs, empower and encourage them to pursue their ambitions and dreams. Many conflicts rely on the contrast between the teenagers and the parents who have migrated to Sweden.

*So what can be the role of public space for encouraging migrants to find their space in the arrival city and how can it be a driver for inclusion?*

Nowadays, there are 43,3% of migrants in Hässelby-Vällingby. It can be said that public space is an important factor that can make diversity visible and appreciable, create a chance to meet and the chance to come together culturally by sharing experiences.

The City district has identified a number of **public squares and spaces** within its territory on which they are currently working in order to make the neighbourhoods **more accessible and attractive**, and therefore **more welcoming to the users**.

Sandi Hilal, a Palestinian born architect and artist now based in Sweden, brought a project to the attention of the international delegates that overturns the perspective. Her question is "how can newcomers and refugees in particular, become host in the country of arrival". Given their temporary and unstable conditions and the limitation in terms of citizenship rights (as we widely discussed in the French case of Grand Paris Sud), newcomers could play an active role in the new city of arrival and finally feel at home, becoming 'host' for the local community who has received them.

She is the initiator of the project "Al-Madhafah: The Living Room"<sup>10</sup>. She started it in Boden (in northern Sweden) where she met a Syrian couple who decided to open their living room to the neighbourhood making it a public space. In this way the couple (refugees) has changed its "institutional role" from being guests in the arrival city, to hosts for their city fellows. She mentioned that this was really innovative for the Swedish community because they tend to swing shut in their private spaces. Hilal explained that, by opening the living room and inviting the local community in, the Syrian couple has actively started a process of inclusion: the living room has become the 'public space' where they could bring the old and the new life together. In her opinion, public space needs transformation to adapt to the present needs. New arrivals are a chance to critically look at our models of society and suggest that maybe it is time to change them.

*Questions for further discussion:*

- *What is the role of public places for the integration of newly arrived migrants?*
- *What do town centres and meetings places mean for the sense of belonging in a city district, area, or block?*
- *How can social and physical planning for such gathering spaces be coordinated with the issues of migration and integration?*

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10 - The video of the Inauguration of Al-Madhafah The Living Room Project In The Yellow House In Boden: <http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/2018/08/inauguration-of-al-madhafah-the-living-room-project-in-the-yellow-house-in-boden/>



### 3. Adapting the welfare state model

#### Changed demographics and economic conditions necessitate to re-think the A-B-C model

##### Challenges

Although they may be recent, the New Towns are undergoing great social and spatial changes. The installation of a diverse foreign population induces various changes (demographic, social, cultural, economic) and challenges public policy in an evolving urban territory, increasingly connected to the rest of the world.

The A-B-C town responded to the needs of its time, but today the questions and ambitions have changed. *Do we need more or new letters – a D-E-F-G, for instance – and what would these new functions be?*

When Vällingby was built it was a shock! Where the Vällingby-Centrum stands today, there used to be farmlands and pastures, tells us Ulrika Sax, ethnologist and architectural historian. The first-generation residents thought they had found heaven. Nevertheless, Vällingby never grew as large as its planners anticipated, but it remained the major centre of neighbourhoods located along the western subway line.

Pioneering the 'ABC-Town' concept, Vällingby was planned as an integral, sustainable ensemble of public services, local workplaces, private enterprises, a varied architecture and housing typologies and careful landscaping with the ambition to transform a tabula rasa into a real town. It included all facilities required for a happy and modern life based on the ideal of equality aimed at eradicating poverty and inequalities (whether they relate to social economic, ethnic, or religious or physical conditions).



Historical postcard: aerial view of Vällingby showing the different housing typologies aggregated around the central hub gathering urban services and cultural facilities

Source: Petronella Mill

Despite the fact that the original plan estimated a high number of local workplaces compared to other parts of the Stockholm region, and new jobs were supposed to be generated by local industries, offices, services and institutions, the A-B-C idea in practice became a B-C city: *"The amount of actualised local work places never matched the visions of the master plan [..]"*<sup>11</sup>.

At the end of the 1950s, the period of the babyboom, the population in Vällingby peaked to 24,000 persons living in the core area of Vällingby, Grimsta and Räcksta, Ulrika Sax says. In the mid-1960s, Vällingby Centrum was extended with half its size, although numbers were already going down to 22,500 Vällingbies. This moment corresponded to the teenage boom. In the 1974 the number of inhabitants had further decreased to 15,600. Yet it was difficult for young people to find housing and jobs within the city district.

11 - "Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel", author: Signe Sophie Bøggild p.141

Drugs and conflicts urged many among the first generation to move to the newer areas created within the “One Million Programme”, like in Rinkeby and Tensta in the north of Vällingby. Similarly, the larger companies that were located in Vällingby and Johannelund moved to newer facilities nearby.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the town centre was also slowly decaying. Ulrika Sax talks about **empty nesters**: only seniors and the old pioneers remained in the New Town, apparently the last of the original inhabitants. The aging is a common factor to the change of demographics in the postwar New Towns. **In the pioneer years (until 1966) when the population was young**, 30 percent consisted of children and only 2,6 percent of elderly.

*“Like many other countries in the age of globalisation, [...] important workplaces – especially within industry and trading goods – have disappeared or reduced in size since the mid-1980s (35 percent from the 1988 to 1998). During the 1990s, the corporation Konsumentverket moved from the industrial area Johannelund, while many enterprises and offices emptied. Moreover, the number of employees in the large office building of the National Power Board Vattenfall in Räcksta has decreased in tandem with the vacating of the company’s offices in Hässelby Gård.”<sup>12</sup>*

In the late 1990s, only 13,400 residents lived in the inner parts of Vällingby and that’s when Vällingby started to go through several regeneration programs. *“In 1998, 15 percent of the total working population in Vällingby was employed locally, whereas 22 percent worked in another municipality”<sup>13</sup>.*

### **A slow and painful transition**

Today the demographics have changed again and more than 40% of the population is coming from other countries, from other districts of Stockholm, primarily the north-western part of the region. This is, interestingly, from the same areas where the children of the first generation of pioneers had moved in the 1970s. Less than half of the working population work locally, while the percentage of car-dependent commuters (with jobs spread out in the region) has gone up.

With a varied range of residential types, in Hässelby-Vällingby the 32% of the population occupies single-family houses and 68% lives in flats in multi-family buildings. **Leasehold units (hyresrätter) represent 70% of the housing solutions in the multi-family buildings.**

If the founding model implied that *“local industries should have been able to provide jobs for both men and women”*<sup>14</sup> within a walking distance, the reality today is that people have to travel long distances to get to their workplaces. The original political and social functions of the city have become outdated, and the contemporary work models have changed from the home-work trajectory to the more flexible networking systems. This implying a complete rethinking of the A-B-C model.

The discussion during the lab has led to contemplate the possibility of increasing the letters/values integrating the historical city functions A-B-C with additional elements such as D (Diversity) or (Do-er – change makers, people who do things) – E (Equality, Education) – F (Fairness) and K (Kunst).

#### *Questions for further discussion:*

- *What consequences should the changed perspectives on work (A), dwelling (B), and centre (C), have for the physical environment? Are the concepts of ABC still central for social and physical planning, or have they become obsolete?*

- *Migration policies (in Sweden) are often predicated on a misguided notion that only legal citizens contribute to the economic development of the nation and of society. How are immigrants and unemployed affected by such definitions?*

- *What does the localisation of workplaces mean with respect to integration?*

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12- “Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel”, author: Signe Sophie Bøggild p.190

13 - “Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel”, author: Signe Sophie Bøggild p.190

14 - Sven Markelius and Göran Sidenbladh: “Town Planning in Stockholm: Housing and Traffic”, in **Ten Lectures on Swedish Architecture**. Stockholm: Svenska Arkitekters Riksförbund, 1949, p. 75 and 78. Quote from “Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel”, author: Signe Sophie Bøggild

# 4. Building a positive narrative

## Understanding cultural differences

### Challenges

Like many other middle-aged New Towns across Europe, the A-B-C town of Vällingby finds it hard to recognize itself. The image of the social-democratic model based on universalism, standardisation and collectivism is challenged by neoliberal politics, on the one hand, with changes in economic and social policies, and on the other, by a more diverse and multicultural population.

*“Although Sweden can seem like the happy, neutral and well-organised IKEA country on the surface, its later history of (im)migration and urbanisation has been both turbulent and rapid.”*<sup>15</sup> Before 1930, more than a million Swedes immigrated to the United States. From then onwards internal migrations have seen many leave the countryside and move to the urban centres; the years 1950s and 1960s saw the creation of the first planned communities with thousands of people migrating to the post-war satellite towns. Since the years 1970s and 1980s international immigrations have increased with hundred thousand refugees and guest labourers arrived from all over the globe.

In December 2015, the larger district of Hässelby-Vällingby had more than 72,500 inhabitants of which 43,3% have a foreign background (born abroad or born in Sweden with both parents born abroad), which is a higher proportion than the average of 32,8% in Stockholm as a whole (as of 2017).

Through its architectural layouts and models the Swedish Welfare state sought to create social justice through equality and uniformity.<sup>16</sup> The modernist urban design and top-down planning were instruments to achieve the standardisation of good living conditions for all. The target of the pioneer city was monocultural: *“the ethnical Swedish family with a working father, a housewife mother, kids, healthy economy, and (after Vällingby) probably a Volvo or Saab”*<sup>17</sup>, a portrait which is practically disappeared. The arrival of new and diverse populations challenged this overall cultural system.

Showing that it is not always easy to create understanding between different cultures, Jennifer Mack, associate professor of Theory and History of Architecture at KTH, talked in her presentation about her publication ‘The construction of Equality’, a research about the city Södertäljen.

Södertäljen became the capital of the Syriac diaspora: it was called Mesopotalje. While the Swedish society was built on equality and collectivity, the Syriacs were used to (because of their Christian religion) be isolated and different from the other Syrians and to be together in an enclave. Syriacs and newcomers changed the taste and the aesthetics of the Swedish city they live in by decorating and customizing their modernist houses. They started a church and a shopping centre that took over the function of the original C-centre, in a completely different architectural style. Insights arising from this influx of a different community is that equality doesn't have to be synonymous with anonymous and standard architecture, like the Swedish planning culture assumed in the post-war period.

On the other hand, equality is also hard to combine with the idea of the enclave, which is intrinsically closed to ‘others’. In that sense it also raises the question if the new centre is attractive for other than Syriac groups. It is open, but do people feel welcome?

The A-B-C model is based on a specific societal ideal and Syriacs have showed that it can be adapted to the present and future needs of the community. Inhabitants become city-makers in the construction of the new equality, that also implies a **mutual understanding and acceptance of each other's differences**.

15 - Signe Sophie Bøggild, ‘Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel’, p. 264

16 - Jennifer Mack, 2018 ‘The construction of Equality: Syriac Immigration and the Swedish City’, source the Journal Europe Now

17 - Too good to be true or too bad to be credible - a tale of two towns, the sequel’, author: Signe Sophie Bøggild p. 265



In its presentation Bo Larsson, ethnologist and editor in social science at City Museum of Stockholm), presented his book 'Vällingby: eleven personal histories'. This book contains a rather detailed account of his interviews with citizens of Vällingby, based on the research of the Swedish scholar Börje Hanssen. Hanssen came to Vällingby in 1957 and was very intrigued by the modern developments of the suburb.

In his research, he wanted to prove the theory that relationships between people had changed profoundly since Sweden was no longer an agricultural but a highly industrialized country. To answer this question Hanssen interviewed 10 households about their everyday life. In these interviews, he asked rather personal questions about what people were doing outside and inside their homes, about neighbours and relatives, and about communications (the use of telephones and the means of mass communication like radio and newspapers). Hanssen chose his interviewees according to their dwellings and deliberately wanted his interviewees to come from both the working and middle class to represent the social structure of the city. In 1972, Hanssen repeated his interviews with the same people and published his results in the book 'Family, households, kinship'. In the book he published long extracts of the interviews which still provides a picture of the everyday daily life in Vällingby during that time.

The City Museum of Stockholm decided in 2009 to repeat this study, because there have been qualitative changes in demographics and living conditions since the last study was made.

Different from the very homogenous households Börje Hanssen interviewed in 1957, the new households of 2010 are extremely heterogenous: 'The family in the middle of their thirties with two children has disappeared and, maybe not so surprisingly, there is a mix of variations with several households with roots in non-European countries.'

*Questions for further discussion:*

*If the standardisation was a way not to leave anybody out, the contemporary society has become hybrid: how to give space and expression to it?*

## 5. Government-Citizen relations

### Building trust is key to establishing a dialogue

'How can citizens and residents be involved and make their voices heard?' was commonly recognized by all the public representatives as "the challenge of today" for many local governments. Make citizens active players in the urban project and find new approaches to communicate with them is priority for Vällingby as well. This process also runs in parallel with recognising the role of those associations spontaneously born in the district with the aim to reinforce the citizens' participation and the empowerment of migrant groups, youth and women. The essential problem is segregation. There is a shortage of about 300.000 houses in the region, 150.000 in the centre of Stockholm. The peripheral municipalities are building middle class housing but not affordable housing. This exacerbates the conflict.

*Brommapojkarna* (BP) is Europe's largest football association working in cooperation with other local organisations to promote gender equality and social impact jobs with projects like *Slussen in or Hoodifood*, to stimulate the access to the labour market for migrants.

Together with *Systrar runt hörnet* (SRH, Sisters around the corner), the associations claim the relevance of their work on the ground and ask the municipality for greater attention to what they do. This bottom-up approach is an evolving attitude that certainly can have a positive effect on the process of integration and social cohesion and on the relationship between government and the new citizens.

During the lab, the City district illustrated the variety of services offered by the citizens office. To name a few: the language cafés and Swedish with children (which help the newcomers to better understand the Swedish society), computer courses (to acquire new skills and become independent), 'Hand in Hand' and 'Face to Face', a service where community hosts walk around in the community to provide information and personally talk to refugees and asylum seekers, mentoring programs, youth meetings, and cultural and sport activities.

Yet, there is a huge gap between the city driven decisions and the citizens' actual needs and expectations. Especially the provision of affordable housing remains the key issue.

The Swedish housing model is divided into renting or owning your home. Sweden has a municipal system for public housing and the city is responsible for the local housing supply. To achieve a housing supply though, the city turns both to public partners and the private sector. The line between private and public is blurred due to legislation aiming for open competition in the market. This means that the public rental homes are not to be confused with social housing. Public housing is not targeting any particular social group and acts much like a private company. Housing rents in Sweden today are determined by market parties without public intervention. This is done through collective negotiations according to a system of utility-value rents. Rent is supposed to correspond to the quality, standard and service of the apartment. The housing crisis requires responses which can be only found with the wide cooperation between the public and the private actors, as was shown in the case of Gothenburg during the panel debate on the first day. In fact, this Swedish city has decided to do something innovative, challenging the market forces and the current rules in finding solutions for creating conditions for the production of affordable rental homes.

**A renewed alliance between citizens and government must be formed.** This requires trust and long-term commitment.

The question which remains open and handed down to the next New Town lab in Nissewaard (NL) is: **How can the municipality get closer to the citizens and understand their desires?**

# Conclusions

Vällingby, the A-B-C acclaimed and renowned model, the social-democratic Welfare state flagship of Sweden, doesn't recognize itself anymore. As many other post-war middle-aged New Towns around Europe, its founding principles have become outdated. That faith of the pioneer generation which had moved to the satellite town in the 1950s and 1960s to find a modern and prosperous life, has also gone. The clash between utopia and the rough reality is becoming painful.

Similarly to the other cases explored in this research programme, these New Towns have been deeply hit by the economic crisis during the 1980s and Vällingby, like Evry, has seen its population reduced to half in those years. Interestingly this didn't translate into a larger housing offer because, as Ulrika pointed out, the older people continued to live alone in the same apartments previously occupied with their children. While the 1990s have seen a tentative economic regeneration with great public and private investments in the renewal of the commercial centres: that happened in Vällingby, in Senart, in Milton Keynes and in Spijkenisse. Nonetheless, the outskirts and the peripheral areas have remained untouched for long time.

Each case is of course unique, but all together it is possible to recognize common phenomena: the stronger the ideals of the foundation, the more difficult to understand the changes which occurred and to accept the new image of the city (Evry, Milton Keynes).

**The narrative of the A-B-C model is so powerful that the construction of a new narrative requires a lot of efforts, starting from the understanding of each other's differences.** With 43,3% of citizens with non-Swedish background and thousands of newcomers (refugees and asylum seekers) who arrived between Jan 2015 and Aug 2017, the cultural paradigm needs to be reformulated. The French partners in Evry called this a necessary "change of perspective". Perhaps the city can contemplate the possibility of increasing the letters/values in order to integrate the historical city functions A-B-C with additional elements such as D (Diversity) or (Doer/Doing) – E (Equality, Education) – F (Fairness) and K (Kunst).

**Hidden diversity. Culture and heritage can become factors of mutual recognition and understanding.** As highlighted by Shane Downer (MK Council) during the lab, the original architectural features of the historic listed patrimony of Vällingby Centrum can be valued as a way to **increase awareness among the new inhabitants. Culture can be a driver of inclusive processes and community participation**, where diversity becomes the ingredient and the source of inspiration for the next era of the 'City of tomorrow' (as Vällingby was called in the 1950s).

Like Sandi Hilal explained with her 'living room' project: public space needs to be transformed to adapt to the present needs. New arrivals open the doors of their living rooms to welcome the local Swedish: then the process of inclusion has started. The living room becomes the new "public space" for sharing stories, experiences and backgrounds and the old life comes together with the new one. In her opinion, newcomers are a chance to critically look at our models of society and suggest that maybe it is time to change them.



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# Appendix 1

## Lab Programme

### **DAY 1 : Wednesday, December 12, 2018**

13:00-13:45 Registration and check-in at hotel

13:45-14:00 Welcome and introduction at the hotel

*First Hotel Brommaplan (subway stop: Brommaplan)*

14:00-14:45 Guided Tour of Vällingby

> Short introduction to the town and its surroundings

> Short walking tour of Vällingby Centrum

#### **Seminar 1 Academic Forum**

*Location: Pelarsalen, Folkets hus, Vällingby, Albert Aronssons torg 5*

15:00-15:50 Architectural and Planning Concepts and Typologies of the Vällingby Group

Chair: Erik Stenberg

> Mats Franzén, sociologist, professor emeritus, Uppsala University, "The ABC-town"

> Anna Sundman, architect and founding partner, Theory into Practice, "Höjer & Ljungqvist"

15:50-17:00 Living and Dwelling in Vällingby (B)

Chair: Helena Mattsson

> Pelle Björklund, architect and CEO, Svenska Bostäder: "Svenska Bostäder's role in the development of Vällingby yesterday, today and tomorrow"

> Ulrika Sax, architectural historian and housing researcher, "Living in Vällingby First generation residents"

> Bo Larsson, ethnologist, Stockholm City Museum, "The voices of Vällingby"

17:00-17:30 Coffee Break, with discussion in Workshop Groups

17:30-18:20 Practices and Methods for Understanding and Promoting Integration

Chair: Meike Schalk

> Jennifer Mack, architectural historian and anthropologist, KTH, "The Construction of Equality"

> Sandi Hilal, architect and artist, "Al-Madhafah: The Living Room"

18:20-18:40 Panel Discussion

Moderator: Erik Stenberg

Panel discussion with Mats Franzén, Anna Sundman, Ulrika Sax, Bo Larsson, Jennifer Mack and Sandi Hilal

19:00- Dinner

Buffet dinner in Pelarsalen, Folkets Hus. Discussions in Workshop Groups during dinner.

# Appendix 1

## Lab Programme

### **DAY 1: Thursday, December 13, 2018**

#### **Seminar 2 Hässelby-Vällingby City District**

*Location: Pelarsalen, Folkets hus, Vällingby, Albert Aronssons torg 5*

09.00-09:45 Urban Development and Environment

Magnus Rydevik, unit manager, urban development and environment,  
District Council of Hässelby-Vällingby

09:45-10:15 Coffee Break

10:15-11:15

- > Anders Kindberg, CEO, SHIS Bostäder
- > Linda Björkman, unit manager, citizen services, District Council of Hässelby-Vällingby
- > Jessica Persson, development strategist, District Council of Hässelby-Vällingby

11:30-14:00 Guided bus tour with lunch

- > Guided bus tour of Hässelby-Vällingby
- > Lunch at Grimsta IP

- Presentations by local organizations, Grimsta IP
- > Stefan Bärlin, sustainability manager, Brommapojkarna
  - > Systrar rönt hornet (Sister around the corner)

Walk back to Vällingby Centrum from Grimsta IP (20 min walk) – Discussions during walk in Workshop Groups

#### WORKSHOP

*Location: Pelarsalen, Folkets hus*

14.30-16:00 Workshop

- > Discussions in Workshop Groups + coffee and refreshments
- > Presentation by Workshop Groups + Conclusion

16:00-16:30 Steering committee meeting

- > Review and comments of Lab #4 Vällingby
- > Presentation of next lab in Nissewaard
- > Messages from INTI and project leadership

17:00 Lucia concert at Sankt Tomas Church, Vällingby Centrum

19.00 Dinner at Gnarly Market in Vällingby Centrum (in former dance hall and restaurant Vällingbyhus)



## Appendix 2

### Speakers' biographies



Pelle Björklund is CEO of Svenska Bostäder. Between 2003 and 2008 he was CEO of the Stockholmshem affiliated housing company, which is owned by the City of Stockholm in the same group of companies as Svenska Bostäder. From 1991 to 2003 he was CEO of Väsbyhem, a municipally-owned housing company in a smaller city north of Stockholm. Prior to this, he was Head of Department at SKB, Stockholms Kooperativa Bostadsförening, which is a cooperative housing association in Stockholm. After finishing his architecture studies at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in 1979, he designed a block of houses for Svenska Bostäder.



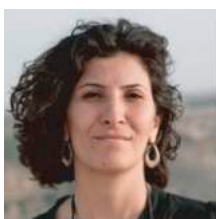
Linda Björkman is Department Manager of Citizen Services at the District Council of Hässelby-Vällingby. The Department of Citizen Services has the mission to provide newly arrived residents of the Hässelby-Vällingby community with information in the form of a Citizen Office and so-called "Citizen Hosts." The Department also maintains a mentoring program and organizes events. Collaborations between Citizen Services and local social associations provide numerous activities for children and youngsters in the Hässelby-Vällingby district.



Stefan Bärlin is Sustainability Manager at Brommapojkarna. Brommapojkarna (BP) is Europe's largest football association with 4,000 football-playing children and adolescents, and about 700 volunteer leaders. Over 1,000 of our young people are girls, which means that we are Sweden's largest girls' football club. In 2018 we had approximately 18,000 activities in the form of workouts and matches, including the 257 teams that participated in series games. BP's activities are mainly focused on children and youth, which corresponds to approximately 95% of our total business. The schools for 6- to 7-year-olds and our teamwork instruction for those 8 years and up are the essence of what we do. BP has taken a strategic decision to act as a responsible social actor and carries out a relatively extensive CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) work, especially under the auspices of what we call "Västerort Meeting Place."



Mats Franzén is Professor Emeritus in sociology at the Institute for Housing and Urban Research, Uppsala University. He has been engaged in urban studies for more than four decades and received his Ph.D. in 1981 for a study of modernist planning ideas and the interventionist state in Sweden from the 1940s to the 1970s (with Eva Sandstedt). He has researched working class Stockholm between the wars, gentrification in Stockholm compared to Hamburg, and contemporary urban entrepreneurialism in Stockholm and Gothenburg, as well as several minor urban studies and some sport sociology and youth studies. Currently he is conducting an oral history of growing up in one of Stockholm's first modern suburbs in the 1950s - Gubbängen.



Sandi Hilal is an architect and researcher. She headed the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Camp Improvement Program in the West Bank (2008–2014). Together with Alessandro Petti, she is a founding member of DAAR, an architectural studio and artistic residency programme that combines conceptual speculations and architectural interventions ([www.decolonizing.ps](http://www.decolonizing.ps)). Alongside research and practice, Hilal is engaged in critical pedagogy and is a founding member of Campus in Camps, an experimental educational programme run by an Al Quds University/Bard College partnership in Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Bethlehem ([www.campusincamps.ps](http://www.campusincamps.ps)). For the Swedish Art Agency, she currently conducts the public art project 'Al-Madafeh: The Hospitality Room', together with refugees in Boden. She is also a research fellow at ArkDes, 2018-2019.

## Appendix 2

### Speakers` biographies



Anders Kindberg is CEO of SHIS Bostäder. SHIS Bostäder is Stockholm City's residential social resource. We work with the city's mission to provide short-term housing for people who are in need of temporary housing for social and/or economic reasons, as well as to offer longer-term housing for those in need of extended housing support. We are a municipal, non-profit foundation that is explicitly designed to help people in vulnerable situations, a unique role that feels extraordinary and rewarding.



Bo Larsson has worked in museums in Stockholm since 1991, to a large part with contemporary collections and acquisitions. Currently he is employed at the City Museum of Stockholm, where he partly works as an ethnologist partly as an editor in social science for the publisher Stockholmia forskning och förlag. He has a Ph.D. in economic history from Uppsala university/Nordiska museets forskarskola.



Jennifer Mack is Associate Professor at KTH School of Architecture. She combines history, ethnography, and formal analysis to study social change and the built environment, including research on the architecture and planning of mosques and minority churches, the landscapes of modernist neighborhoods, and the collisions between mid-20th century Swedish design norms and the needs and innovations of migrants. She received the 2018 SfAA/AAA Margaret Mead Award for her book, 'The Construction of Equality: Syriac Immigration and the Swedish City' (University of Minnesota Press). Mack holds a PhD from Harvard University, an MArch and MCP from MIT, and a BA from Wesleyan University.



Helena Mattsson is Professor in History and Theory and Head of Department at KTH School of Architecture. Her research deals with the 20th century theory of welfare state architecture and contemporary architectural history with a special focus on the interdependency between politics, economics and spatial organizations. She is the co-editor of 'Swedish Modernism: Architecture, Consumption, and the Welfare State' (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2010), the themed issue of 'Architecture and Culture Architecture and Capitalism: Solids and Flows' (2017), and the forthcoming book 'Neoliberalism: An Architectural History' (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press). She is currently working on a book on postmodernism and politics in Swedish architecture. She is a member of the editorial board of Journal of Architecture.



Jessica Persson is Development Strategist/Secretary at the District Council of Hässelby-Vällingby. She is responsible for undertaking decision-making about matters like the business plan and our analytical reports, and she is also responsible for leading goal definition and budgetary processes within the Department of Prevention and Social Work..



Magnus Rydevik is Head of the Department of Urban Environment. The Department of Urban Environment is responsible for the maintenance and development of the many parks and large natural areas located within the district of Vällingby-Hässelby. This “green structure” is critical for the urban development of the area. It can, for example, be used to connect different socioeconomic areas in order to increase social sustainability. The members of the department cooperate closely with central divisions in Stockholm in our work with sustainable city development.



Ulrika Sax is an ethnologist and holds a PhD from the KTH School of Architecture, at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. She has written numerous books, including two about the suburbanisation of Stockholm in the 20th Century. One book, published by the City Museum publisher Stockholmsia förlag, is about the planning of the new town Vällingby and the outcome of the design visions. As an ethnologist, she is particularly interested in how the built environment affects people's living conditions.



Meike Schalk is Associate Professor of Urban Design and Urban Theory at KTH School of Architecture. She is concerned with critical inquiry into questions of sustainability, democracy, and citizen participation in urban development processes, using practice-led research methods. She is a co-founder of Action Archive, a non-profit organization dedicated to urban research through the approaches of oral history and participatory historiography together with the artist and architect Sara Brolund de Carvalho and the architect and architectural historian Helena Mattsson. Most recently, she concluded a study as part of the Decode research project that focused on the Swedish model of the welfare state in depopulated areas of the rural North.



Erik Stenberg is an architect, Associate Professor at the KTH School of Architecture, and Assistant Director of KTH Center for a Sustainable Built Environment. He leads Grön BoStad Stockholm, a 5-year 92 MSEK EU project with the aim to make the housing sector in the greater Stockholm region smarter, greener, and more socially sustainable. Since 1999 he has been engaged in the practice, research, and politics of restructuring the so-called “Million Program” in Sweden. He has redesigned apartments, organized a housing fair (Tensta Bo 2006), researched and exhibited archival material, started an introductory architecture school in one of Stockholm's largest modernist housing areas, and lectured extensively both nationally and internationally. He is co-editor of the book 'Sustainability in Scandinavia: Architectural Design and Planning.'



Anna Sundman is an architect and co-founder of Theory Into Practice, an architectural office that combines research and design. Their work often starts from the context of complex societal challenges and builds cross-disciplinary partnerships to develop innovative ideas, using architecture as the working medium. She is currently leading a research project aiming to challenge car dependency norms in the development of Swedish housing Theory Into Practice



Systrar runt hörnet (SRH) (Sisters around the corner) is a nonprofit “girlfriend” who works to strengthen, organize, and engage teenage girls in the suburbs. They are currently working in the Hässelby area. The association started in 2016 and has grown enormously since then. The members have increased in number, strengthened in resolve, and consolidated their efforts. The need for this group is great because there is all too often an exclusive focus on boys in the suburbs. We therefore want to make sure that girls do not disappear from view. relies on a strong foundation in theory, but the most important results are the built spaces that offer more sustainable ways of living.



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