

Social mix in Swedish municipalities

Findings and reflections from an ongoing research project

Nordic City Network

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Formas project on social mix 2018-2023

Aim:

“To investigate what happens when municipalities and municipal housing companies (MHCs) try to facilitate the social mixing policy to promote a versatile composition of households.”

Research questions

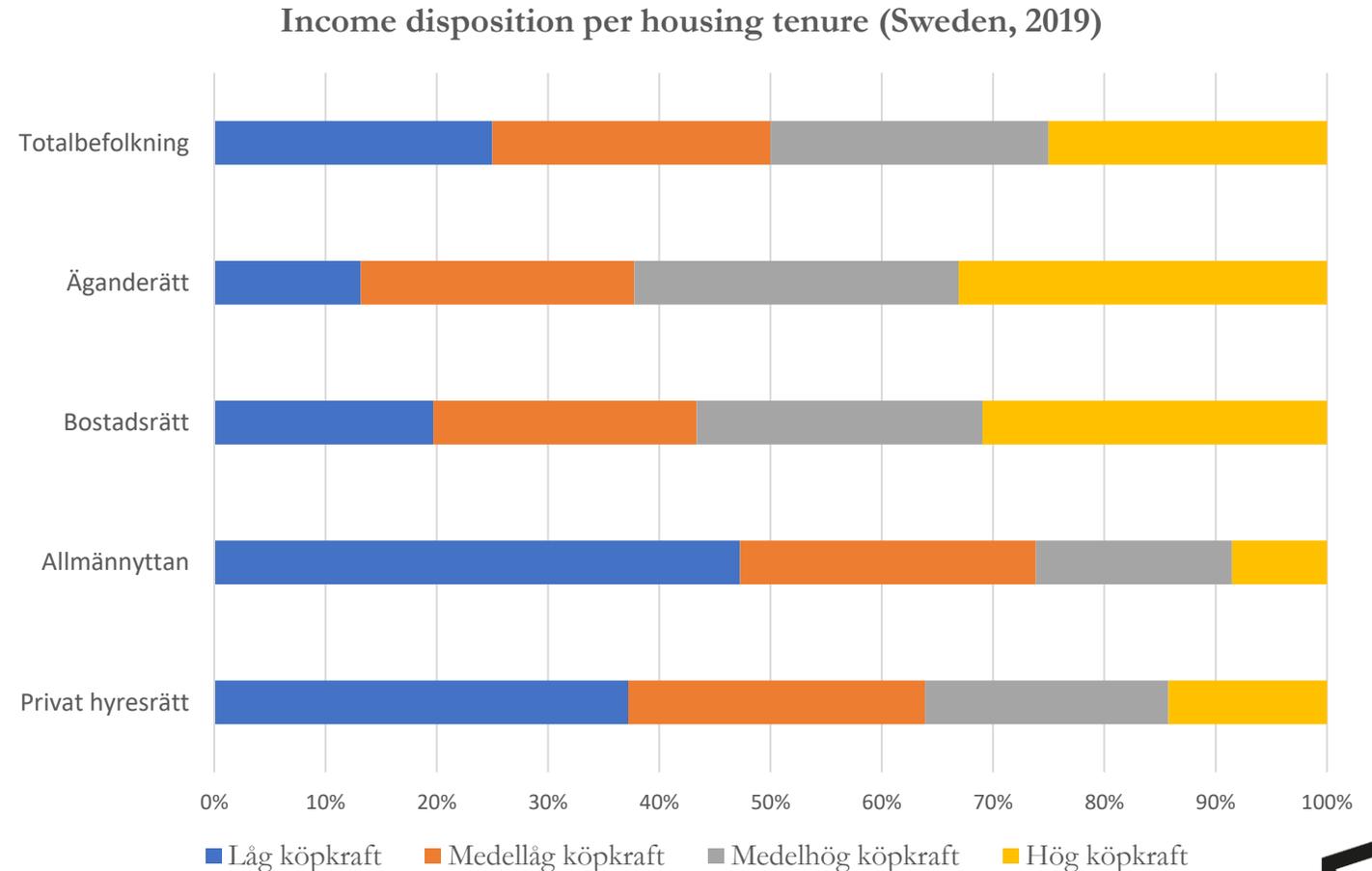
1. What *conceptions* lies behind the decisions made by municipalities and MHCs regarding social mixing?
(The why-question)
2. What *practices* employed to achieve social mixing can be identified?
(The how-question)
3. What are the *outcomes* of policies and practices with regard to the reality of social mixing?
(The what-question)

Why mix?



Background: increasing segregation and segmentation

- The concept of social mix must be understood as a response to increasing *segregation*
- Segregation is connected to *housing segmentation* – i.e., how living conditions (income, education, overcrowding, health etc) differ between different housing tenures
- Social mix = Tenure mix?



Why mix?

‘Why, mixing is good’

- Social mix have a very clear position in planning and policy
- It is something that “should be done”.
- However, with quite unclear ideas about what the mixing is meant to achieve, and what it is that should be mixed

”Jag tänker att jag blir ju sannolikt en mer komplett och nyanserad människa och med en förståelse för [människors] blandade förutsättningar.” (VD allmännyttigt bostadsföretag)

How to mix?



How to mix?

Four main strategies

1. Mixing housing types and tenures (municipalities and MHCs)
2. Variegated rental policies (MHCs – not so much in other tenures)
3. Geographical variation of prioritized and social contracts (municipalities, MHCs and private property owners)
4. Making people meet (very seldom)

How to mix: housing types and tenures

- A majority of Swedish MHCs apply strategies to mix housing types
- Most common: adding more expensive new production in socio-economic marginalised areas (if the calculations permit)
- But also to build ”where no-one else is building”
- Around half of all MHCs have different **renovation strategies** to create standard and thus rent-level variation within areas, but also within houses
- Small dependency on land ownership
- Half of the MHCs actively work to mix tenures
- New production is the companies' main tool for mixed tenures – often expressed as “to expand where we are weak”
- Acquisitions, sales and tenure conversions are mixing tools used by a few companies
- Large dependency on land ownership

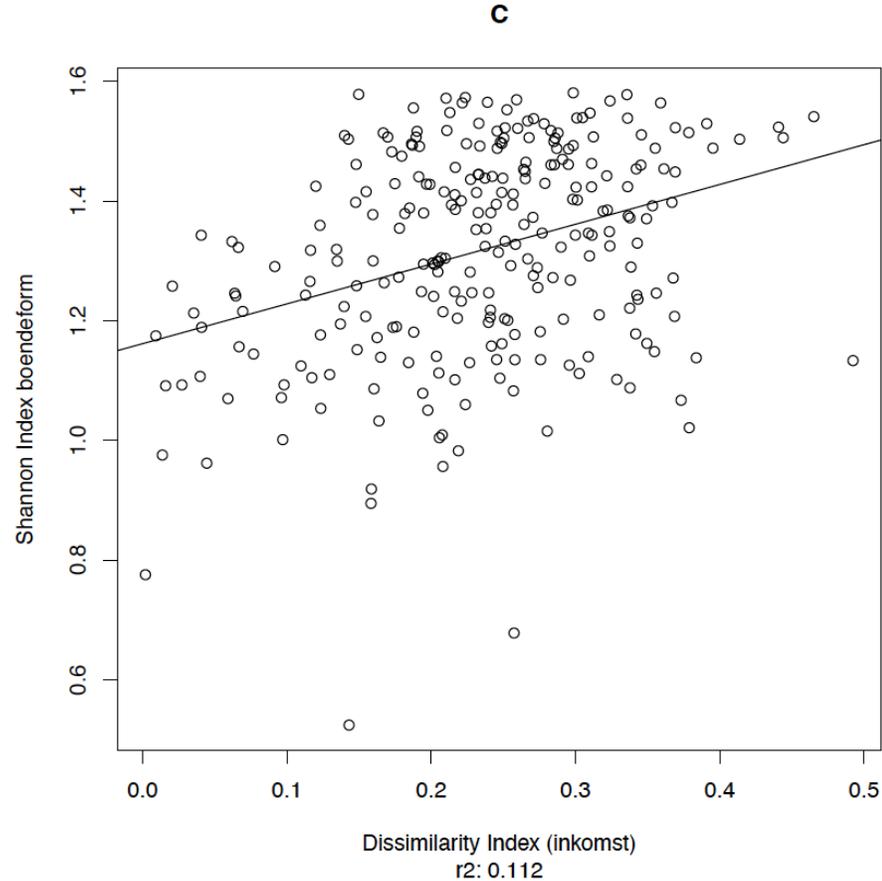
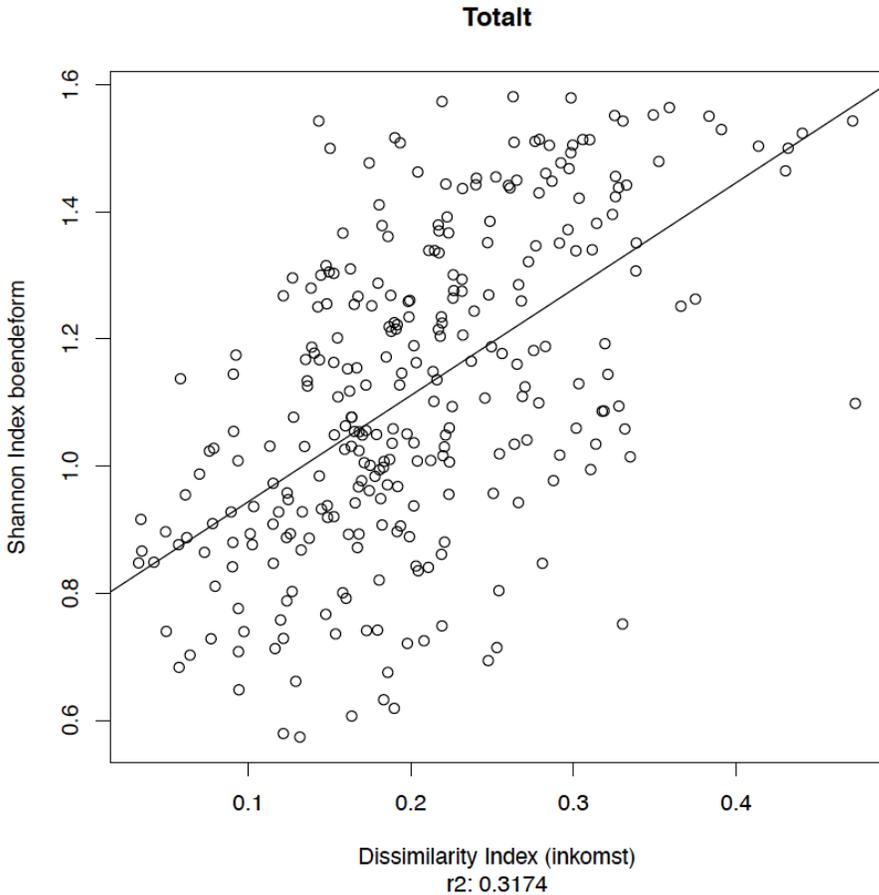
”Vi har naturligtvis stort ansvar men vi är samtidigt väldigt beroende av stadsplaneringen, stadsbyggnadskontoret helt enkelt. [...] Vi tillåts ju inte bygga vad vi vill själva. Om man tittar på de detaljplaner som gjorts och görs upp för [kommunen] så är de väldigt styrande.”

(Ordförande allmännyttigt bostadsföretag)

What works?



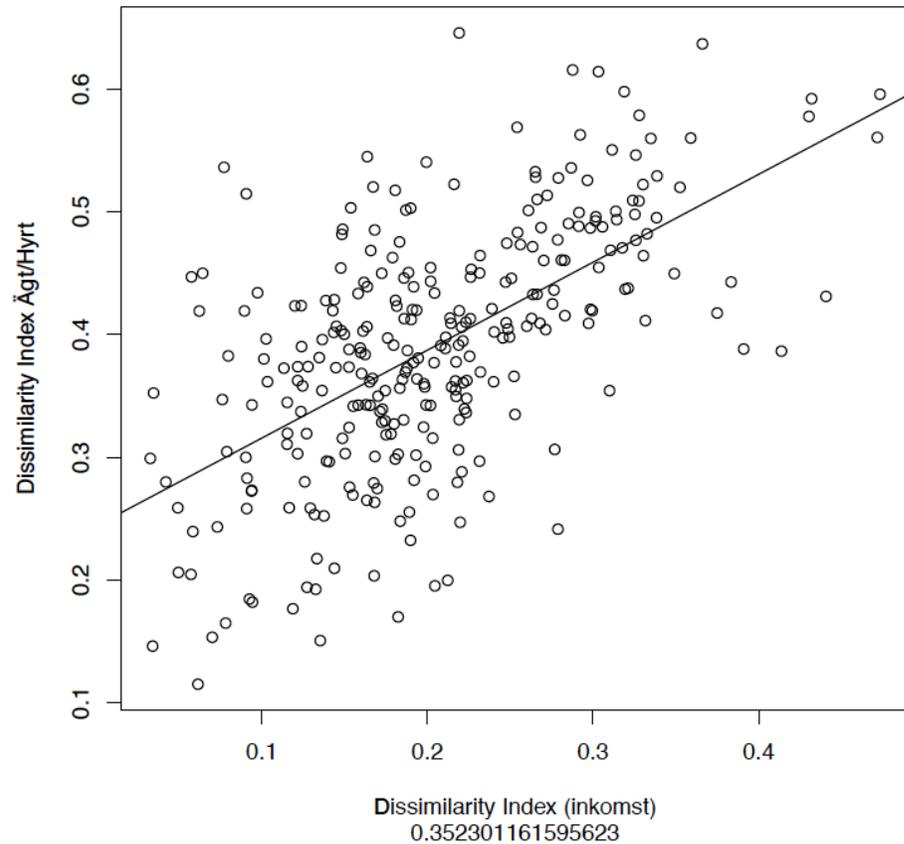
Even tenure composition and segregation



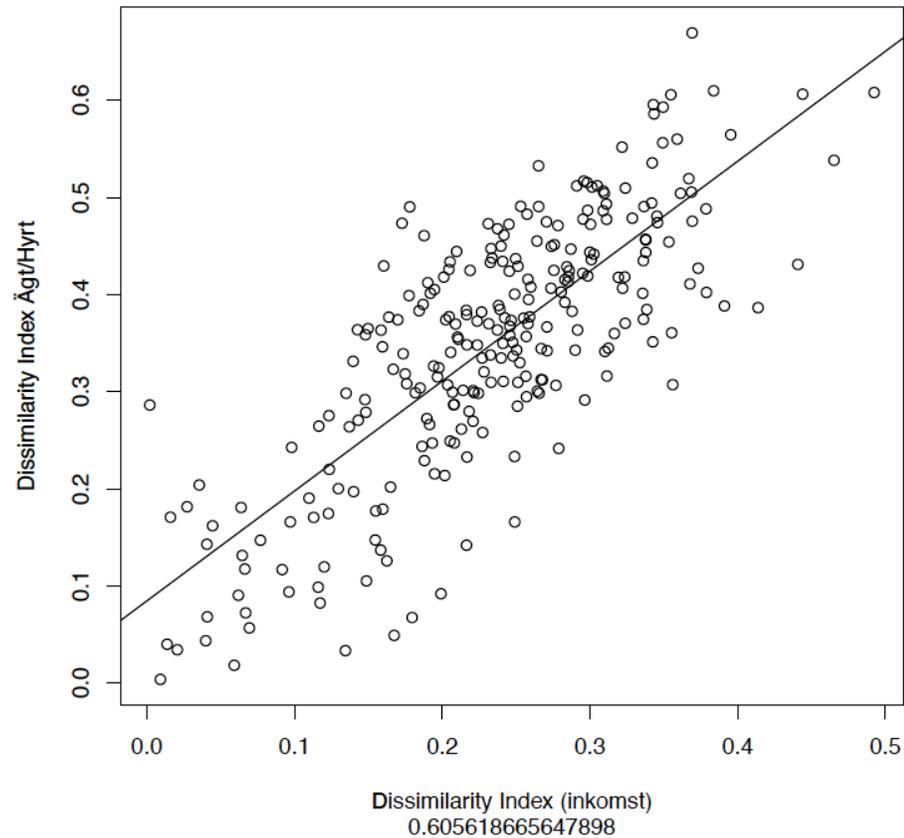
- Strong correlation
- Even composition of housing tenures (high shannon index) do not equal less income segregation (high dissimilarity) – rather the opposite

Tenure mix and segregation

Total



c



- Very strong correlation
- Strong geographical mix (low dissimilarity) of housing tenures equals low income segregation

Some conclusions

- Strong “gut feeling” belief in social mixing in the municipalities and in the municipal housing companies
- Strong belief and a strong focus on mixing housing types and tenures
- Densification in socio-economically weak areas as the main strategy
- Social mixing and tenure mixing are equated. Tenure mix is not always seen as a means to achieve social mixing but a goal in itself.
- Mixing of tenure forms can contribute to reduced segregation, but only if the mixing - or rather the distribution - takes place on a very small geographical scale.
- Few concerns about potential risks of social mix (gentrification etc), and few ideas of alternatives to mixing
- A general question – could social mix be seen as a compensatory measure, implying that the welfare state is incapable of reducing inequalities?

Principles for reducing segregation :

Equalizing and/ or mixing

- ***Equalizing:*** Reduce differences in living conditions through general and targeted welfare efforts - improve living conditions of people living in marginalized areas
 - Does not affect the *composition* of the population (in the short term)
- ***Mixing:*** Accept differences in living conditions - change the composition of the population to create a "social mix"
 - Does not affect the *living conditions* (in the short term)
 - Reliance on *neighbourhood effects* - who we live next to affect us in different ways

Tack

