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The Outdoor Area Implications of Mixed Housing Tenure Initiatives—A Swedish Case in Tynnered, Gothenburg

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Abstract: Mixing tenure types is often seen as a means of reducing segregation by breaking up concentrations of poverty. Previous research suggests that introducing new tenure types may also result in homeowners erecting fences and attempting to control activity by public housing tenants in outdoor spaces. These have often meant that tenure mix rather than reducing segregation has instead inscribed it within neighbourhoods. We conducted a case study of a mixed-tenure neighbourhood in Sweden, relying primarily on resident interviews. The results were analysed thematically using the concepts of nested commons, gentrification of outdoor space, and a smorgasbord of places. We found some evidence of new fencing and of attempts to modify shared outdoor area use, but overall, relations remained harmonious. We argue that this was largely because the smorgasbord of places created by the original planners has largely remained intact, and because there were not sharp social differences between the residents of the different tenure forms. Nevertheless, we argue that the outdoor implications of tenure mix initiatives can be crucial to the outcomes of such initiatives, and that they deserve serious attention from policymakers and practitioners.

Keywords: tenure mix; social mix; outdoor areas; urban planning; urban green space; segregation; public housing; housing cooperatives

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1. Introduction

This article addresses the issue of how outdoor spaces are managed in mixed-tenure residential areas. Existing studies of tenure mix initiatives in concentrations of public housing have often concluded that the disposition of outdoor areas has influenced the outcomes of tenure mixing, at the same time as tenure mix initiatives have changed the disposition of outdoor areas. The particular scientific issue at stake is that tenure mix initiatives intending to reduce the segregation *of* areas may instead exacerbate segregation *within* those areas. Two specific risks are identified in the literature: first, owner–occupiers enclosing land and denying it to renters, and second, owner–occupiers preferring quieter, calmer outside areas and therefore restricting the outdoor activities of renters. These outcomes have been less frequent where there is ample land, a variety of land uses, and where mixing has not been attempted on a more intimate scale. In the case study we present, the mixing has been at a more intimate scale, namely between buildings. One tenure form is often within eyesight, and often within ten metres, of the other tenure form. Nevertheless, the risks identified in the scientific literature appear to have been avoided. Our research sought to explain this apparent success and to draw conclusions from it. In the remainder of this introduction, we begin (Section 1.1) by presenting some of the broader context that explains the relevance of these issues, and then (Section 1.2) we review earlier literature that has analysed outdoor areas in mixed-tenure residential areas (specifically in concentrations of existing public housing where other tenure forms have been introduced), and we identify the risks noted above. As will be described, the tenure mix in this case was achieved through the sale of half of the municipal rental housing to tenants in a small

neighbourhood in Gothenburg, Sweden; ten years after the sales, we conducted qualitative case studies based on 37 resident interviews and supplemented by on-site observations and key informant interviews (see also Section 2.1 below).

1.1. Context for the Study

The broader context we see for this case is firstly a rise internationally in social mix and tenure mix policies implemented in concentrations of public housing; secondly, a rise in densification policies that are variously motivated but can also increase pressure on outdoor areas; and thirdly, increased tensions in multicultural communities where existing social relations may be challenged by the dramatic rise of ethnonationalist political movements internationally over the past decade or more.

1.1.1. The Rise of Housing Mix Policies

Housing was a central pillar in the development of many post-war welfare states, often leading to mass construction of rental housing for working families. Sweden is a case in point, where—in response to a housing crisis and overcrowded and unsanitary inner-city working-class quarters—a million new homes were built in a decade, mainly on the outskirts of major cities [1]. Notwithstanding that new, modern residential areas provided sanitary, spacious homes with good transport access and ample outdoor spaces for children to play safely and freely, stigmatisation of these areas was often almost immediate [2]. Compounding such stigmatisation, such areas typically have lower incomes and higher levels of unemployment than the average, and this has been argued to in itself be a source of disadvantage to the residents. Internationally, this is often framed in terms of negative neighbourhood effects [3]. In Sweden, policy has increasingly become focused on these areas, not least as a result of concerns about gang-related violent crime [4,5].

Since the turn of the century, in many countries, large-scale public housing estates are being partly or wholly renovated via the introduction of social mixing initiatives [6–9]. This has been pursued through a variety of means, from mixed-tenure initiatives which leave buildings untouched but create a combination of tenancy and ownership among the populations to programmes of demolition of public housing buildings and their replacement with a variety of buildings designed to cultivate a mix of incomes. Attempts to create social mix in residential areas have a long and contested history [8,10]. Research on their effects, both quantitative and qualitative, has tended to be rather inconclusive [11–13]. An aspect that has received less attention is the way that the creation of mixed communities raises questions about how outdoor space is managed, and whether the open-access spaces of mass-produced housing will be the best solutions in a landscape of mixed tenures and mixed housing.

1.1.2. Densification Increasing Pressure on Green Space in Residential Areas

Intensifying these questions in recent years is a turn towards densification in urban planning. This turn has been motivated in various and contested ways that are related to sustainability, and it has created claims on the green spaces that have been integral to the design of many public housing estates [14,15]. This has created an incentive for policy and practice actors to stigmatise and denigrate the green spaces in public housing estates to ease the way for their removal [16]. At the same time, researchers have been motivated to pay more attention to those spaces and to explain why they are often highly valued by residents [17].

1.1.3. External Political Tensions Impacting Outdoor Area Management in Multicultural Communities

These urban planning challenges relating to new housing developments are complicated by changing social and political events. This is well illustrated by the controversial Kviberg case (also in Gothenburg, Sweden). In Kviberg, two multi-storey buildings were constructed diagonally opposite each other in the 1950s. The one to the west was a tenant-

owned cooperative (TOC), and the one to the east was rental housing owned by a municipal housing company (MHC). Between the two buildings was an open playing field. In 2016, however, after sixty years of peaceful and unproblematic co-existence, the TOC took the decision to erect a fence along its southern and eastern boundary, which is the part of the building that faces the MHC rental building. The stated motivation for this was vandalism and theft by young residents of the MHC rental accommodation. Subsequently, the height of the fence was increased to two metres, and after that, it was topped with barbed wire. Again, the stated motivation was that vandals had gone over the lower fences [18,19]. The fact that the barbed wire fence did not fully enclose the TOC and was only erected facing the public housing was partly interpreted as being a symbolic statement designed to denigrate the municipal housing tenants. The varying—and often very strongly felt—responses occasioned by the barbed wire fence were widely reported. Other justifications were articulated not only in terms of local vandalism and thefts but also in terms of national migration challenges and policies; if the national government was not going to keep out problems, then the owner–occupiers of the TOC would have to do it [20]. This occurred at a time when a new influx of asylum-seekers to Europe—and Sweden's welcoming of a large proportion of these—had generated a polarised debate and contributed to the rise in Swedish politics of a far-right party [21]. This example illustrates how local policies about mixed housing and outdoor areas are not merely a product of local forces; additionally, national and international dynamics may create new dynamics locally.

In short, given the proliferation of tenure mix and social mix policies, the trend towards densification in urban planning and international political turbulence can generate challenges in multicultural communities. Therefore, we see the relationship between outdoor areas and tenure mix policies in public housing estates as an important topic for research.

The particular contribution of our study will be to discuss the outcomes of tenure mix in a slightly stigmatised residential area in Gothenburg, Sweden, where mixing has been attempted at a relatively fine-grained level. Other studies suggest this might be difficult, but in this case, it appears to have been relatively unproblematic.

1.2. Theory: Perspectives on Outdoor Areas and Tenure Mix Initiatives

There have been relatively few studies that have directly addressed the issue of outdoor areas in mixed-tenure neighbourhoods [22–25], but to these can be added studies of mixed-tenure neighbourhoods where outdoor areas have been discussed as key factors shaping outcomes, as well as studies of the management of outdoor spaces in public housing estates, which provide relevant context. We use this literature to highlight three complementary theoretical perspectives: firstly, outdoor areas as *nested commons*; secondly, outdoor areas as sites where social relations (especially segregation) are inscribed on the landscape, potentially creating an *outdoor gentrification front*; and thirdly, outdoor areas as *a smorgasbord of places*, including public, semi-public, semi-private, and private.

1.2.1. Urban Space as Nested Commons

Shared outdoor spaces are often valued and conceptualised as commons. As we have seen, in a welfare state context, commons are often imagined at the national level and as available to all. In Sweden, public housing is termed "allmännyttan" which translates to "for the common good" [1]. In this sense, the public spaces in public housing areas have been seen as an integral part of what is provided by the welfare state, conceptualised as welfare landscapes [15,26]. However, much of the thrust of commons theory focuses on drawing a distinction between a commons for everybody, termed an "open-access regime", and a commons as a form of property and resource management centred on a particular community. When scaled down to a specific community managing resources in a specific area in this way, a functioning commons is often held to require the ability of the community to define its boundaries and exclude others so that that internal rules and sanctions developed within the community can be meaningful and effective [27,28]. As

Nonini [29] noted, any local urban commons is potentially in tension with a sense of the city or the nation as a commons for all of its citizens.

Since 1991, in Sweden, the deregulation of municipally owned housing has allowed the arms-length municipal housing companies to sell housing to tenants in the form of tenant-owned cooperatives (TOCs—in Swedish, *Bostadsrättsföreningar*, or BRF). These, then, provide just such a form of nested commons, where the tenants jointly own the building and the outside areas on the building plot. While researchers have used Ostrom's design principles as a framework for understanding the extent to which cooperatives function for the good of their members [30], the creation TOCs has also been associated with a tendency to enclose their property within physical borders.

A study by Herbert in Sweden's third city, Malmö, suggests that the erection of fences has become a common strategy, especially for tenant-owned cooperatives, and especially in parts of the city that are resource poor and considered segregated [31]. The common resource that is discussed in Herbert's analysis is security. She describes a situation where residents have lost faith in the police and in the state to provide adequate support to the police and therefore increasingly regard their neighbourhoods as vulnerable to crime. In the absence of general security for all, they invest in fences to try to create security for themselves within the immediate vicinity of their homes. She compares this with studies of similar developments in the Netherlands, where such fencing and enclosures were interpreted as residents making a strategic decision to "exit" the wider community rather than use "voice" strategies to try to improve conditions there [32].

1.2.2. Gentrification of Outdoor Areas

Strategies of tenure mix and housing mix have long and varied traditions, which can be related to ideals of diversity and social interaction between different classes and categories of people [8]. However, a theme in the field of tenure and social housing mix research has been the frequently limited social interaction between the groups that are being "mixed" [3,8]. Some of the theoretical justifications for creating mixed-tenure neighbourhoods do not require interactions between the different tenures; for example, when it is argued that an introduction of owners into neighbourhoods where there were previously only tenancies might improve the reputation of the neighbourhood, which may yield benefits for all residents [33,34].

Not only does the literature suggest that there might be limited social interactions between different tenure forms, but it also suggests that there might be an active competition over outdoor spaces. The dividing line between tenures may be interpreted less as a boundary and more as a frontier; in other words, not just a "mixing" of two different residential classes, but the taking over of an area by one class. The inclusion of "recreation" in a classic definition of gentrification, "the transformation of inner-city working-class and other neighborhoods to middle-and upper-middle-class residential, recreational, and other uses" [35], reminds us of the potential territoriality of a new class of people in a neighbourhood. Subsequent studies have shown how this not only includes a middle class preference for quieter neighbourhoods with less human activity in shared outdoor spaces [23] but also attempts by the middle class to curb activities such as barbecues, hanging out or informal sports games in shared outdoor spaces [36], as illustrated by one of Chaskin and Joseph's respondents as follows: "Because, you know, as a homeowner when I come home from a hard day's work, or an easy day of work, I really don't want to see people hanging out on the front porch" [37]. The association of particular tenure forms with particular behaviours may not be well-grounded; another of their home-owning respondents described himself coming home rowdily from a party in the early hours, and knowing that neighbours would assume that he is a public housing tenant rather than a homeowner [37].

1.2.3. A Smorgasbord of Places

Finally, we turn to a perspective that suggests that successful social mixing might best occur in a context where residents are offered a choice of public, semi-public/semi-private, and private spaces [23]. This suggestion of a choice of spaces has a somewhat controversial lineage, as it is associated with the work of Oscar Newman and his proposition of "defensible space" as a means of urban design to contribute to crime reduction [38,39]. The defensible space concept has travelled widely and in a variety of forms, including being associated with architectural determinism [40] and with hostility towards shared public spaces in residential urban areas [41]. Nevertheless, it has also been mobilised in relation to discussions of the role of outdoor areas in the creation of successful mixed tenure and mixed housing neighbourhoods [23,25].

A study of the Angus estate in Montreal in the 1990s described it as a broadly successful (though not easily replicable) instance of a mixed-tenure development [23]. Within the estate, different tenure types were clustered, with each tenure type generating its own characteristic outdoor areas nearby. Cooperative housing had been established in a tradition that saw cooperative organisation as an end in itself and not just as a means by which to secure ownership; in clusters of cooperative buildings, there was therefore investment in play areas and parks where people would meet and interact with each other. In contrast, private housing tended to feature residents who were less present and less invested in the local area. They primarily valued calmness and stillness and preferred lawns and trees.

One conclusion from that study was that a multiplicity of different types of space is important to enable successful interactions in a mixed-tenure community. It argued that planners should not try to create spaces that force people to interact, but rather that residents should be provided with choices that facilitate interaction; they thus recommended:

> *. . .a hierarchy of spaces going from the private and semi-private to the semi-public and public realms must be provided for residents to feel free to "stay with their own" or mingle with other people, and to be able to move between various alternatives for socializing* [23]

The concept of a hierarchy of spaces from private to public was not, however, assumed to be easily achievable or to apply in all situations in the same way. In the case of the Angus estate, the authors noted that it was a low-density area with generous public space between the different clusters that served as a buffer, and that the tenure mix was at the scale of clusters of buildings rather than between adjacent buildings or within buildings. Subsequent studies have often shown tensions arising in cases where mixing is at a more intimate scale, where there is only one type of public space, and where settlements are relatively dense [25,42]. In Levin et al.'s (2014) [25] study, for example, three buildings were to be built around three sides of a courtyard, which would be shared. Two of the buildings would be for private owners and the third for social tenants. However, during the construction process, the private developer successfully lobbied to have the shared area reserved exclusively for the private tenants in order to maximise property values in those apartments. In contexts (such as contemporary Sweden) where authorities are under pressure to maximise land rents and where the planning preference is for denser settlements, the creation of a smorgasbord of places for all may present different challenges from those found in Angus. Previous research has, for example, suggested that attempting to sustain a variety of spaces by combining one group of residents' ownership rights with access rights to a wider group may also prove challenging [43].

1.2.4. Towards an Analytical Framework

Earlier work on outdoor areas in the mixed-tenure residential areas reviewed above suggests a series of analytical perspectives that can be bought to bear. The notion of *nested commons* suggests that attempts to achieve collective management at the building level may provide incentives to enclose former shared space, which may conflict with the idea of outdoor space as a commons, accessible for all. The tendency to enclose may likewise create segregation within a neighbourhood, which is the precise opposite to the

social integration and social inclusion effects that are often claimed to motivate tenure mix initiatives. The *gentrification of outdoor areas* highlights the risk that middle class tastes for calm, quiet outdoor areas may lead to attempts at social control over the outdoor activities of public/municipal housing tenants. Meanwhile, the *smorgasbord of places* concept that we use here refers to the way that the tensions arising from nested commons and gentrification of outdoor areas may be averted if all residents have adequate access to a choice of outdoor areas. However, that this may be contingent on mixing being at a larger scale (e.g., clusters of buildings or whole neighbourhoods) rather than at a more intimate scale (between or within buildings).

The way that these key concepts combine to provide an analytical framework for this study is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Analytical framework.

Key Concept	Critical Question
Nested commons	Are small-scale commons achieved at the cost of larger-scale commons?
Gentrification of outdoor areas	Are (middle-class) preferences for calm and quiet near the home placing limits on (working class) preferences for conviviality and activity near the home?
Smorgasbord of places	Does access to a range of public/semi-public/semi-private/private outdoor spaces prevent tensions between residents of different tenure forms?

2. Materials, Methods, and Description of Case

2.1. Materials and Methods

The materials for this case study were generated during a five-year (2019–2024) research project which investigated resident experiences of a mixed-tenure initiative in a small residential neighbourhood of about 500 apartments in Gothenburg, Sweden. The site was chosen because it was the largest of three locations in the city where the municipality had trialled mixing tenures by selling municipal housing to tenants who then formed tenant-owned cooperatives. Because the municipal council stopped the conversions in 2008, an area was created where two different tenure forms existed side by side. The main materials on which this article is based were 37 resident interviews. These were supplemented by 15 key informant interviews with officials and workers employed in the area, and by observations of outdoor area use.

The interviewees included both long-term and more recent residents, and both municipal tenants and members of housing cooperatives. In order to understand the relationships between tenure mixing and outdoor areas, we asked residents about their experience of the neighbourhood, about the way they talked about the neighbourhood to others, about routes they took through the neighbourhood and places that they particularly liked and used or disliked and avoided within the area. Additionally, we asked more specific questions about the erection of fences, planting of gardens, and about how outdoor areas are managed and maintained in the neighbourhood. The interview data were analysed thematically, firstly by identifying all text relevant to outdoor area use, and then by associating all of this text with one or more of the three key concepts in the analytical framework (Table 1). In addition to our interviews, we carried out observations in the area. These included both informal observations, as we regularly cycled, walked, or ran through the neighbourhood during the study period, as well as more formal daily observations during July–September, 2023, when we sat at different spots (usually picnic benches) in the area and both worked and paid attention to what was going on in different parts of the neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood is located in an area of the city called Tynnered, which has been associated with relative poverty and crime and was at the start of the research classified by police as "especially vulnerable (to crime)" (*ett särskilt utsatt område*). Our research project

was initially focused on resident experiences of tenure mixing, and especially of its impact on resident activism towards neighbourhood improvement. Our interest in outside areas emerged during the early stages of the project.

2.2. Detailed Description of Case Study Neighbourhood

Before the 1960s the research area was part of the agricultural belt surrounding the industrial city of Gothenburg. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a mass housing programme, known as "the Million Programme", in Sweden, which sought to address housing shortages and especially to alleviate the effects of overcrowded and poor-quality housing in inner-city areas by building new estates on the outskirts of cities [1]. Before the Million Programme, the area of Tynnered, to the south of the city, was agricultural. By its completion, it was a large residential area featuring modernist housing with separation of traffic and residential areas and generous affordances of green spaces and trees within and between neighbourhoods.

The study area (Figures 1 and 2) is rectangularly shaped, stretching north to south, roughly 200 m by 500 m. It is topographically uneven; within the area, there is a slope from north up to south, and it sits above the surrounding landscape with steep slopes on all four sides. To the north, it is bounded by a six-lane major road and a tramline which separate it from a major shopping centre, Frölunda Torg, also built in the 1960s and serving much of the western part of Gothenburg. To the east, there is a small park with an outdoor gym and a small football field managed by the municipal park authority. Further down the hill, there is grass and forests managed by the municipal housing company, which also owns the architecturally similar neighbourhood at the bottom of the hill that wholly consists of municipal rental properties. To the south, there is a sleep stope—suitable only for walking and not for bicycles—down to a green area broken up by three schools, with a more affluent hilltop owner-occupied area further southeast and an architecturally similar area southwest. To the west, there is a steep wooded slope down to a tramline and a wide two-lane road, then lawns and car parks and a playground before an area of private rentals, which to the south, extending to Opaltorget (Figure 1), are part of a major urban renewal and densification programme that was being undertaken during the study period. A small area to the south of the footpath down to the tram stop is also managed by the municipal park authority (Figure 3).

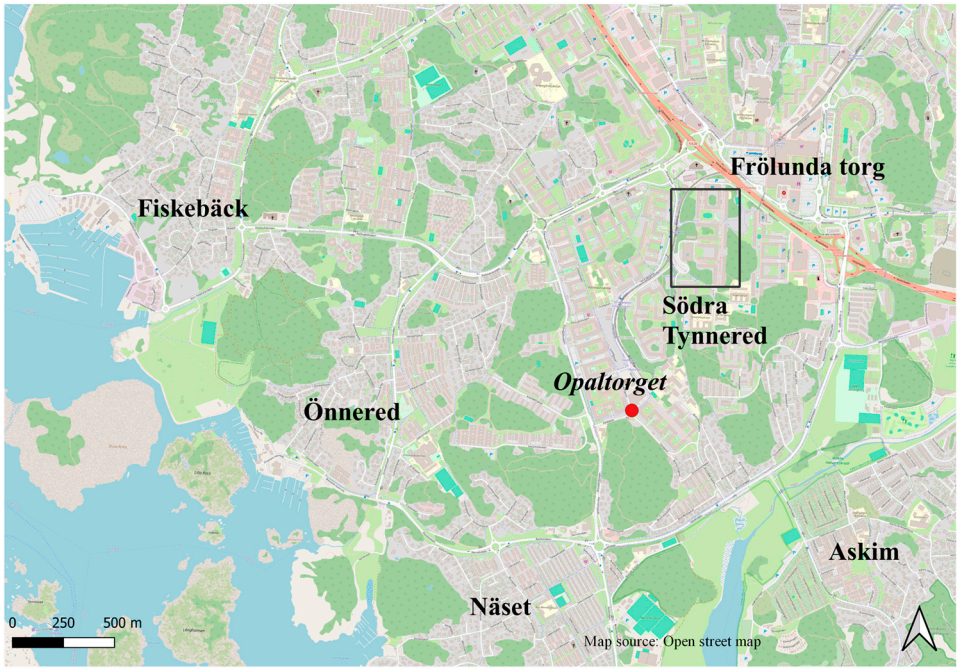

Figure 1. Study site in Southwest Gothenburg.

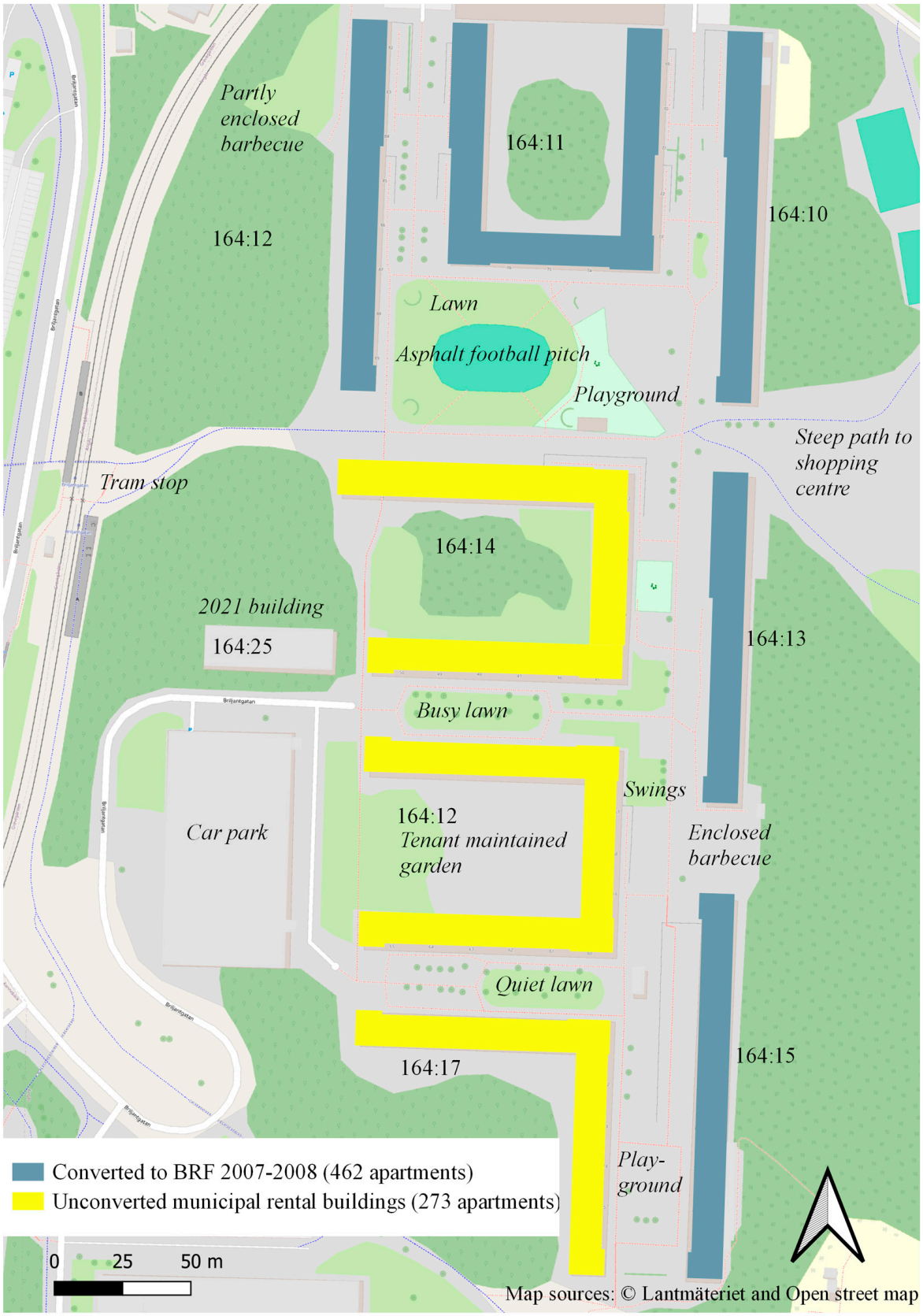

Figure 2. The study area with building plot numbers marked and tenure types colour-coded.

Figure 3. Grass and woodland maintained by the municipal park authority, alongside the path to the tram stop, with the 10-storey building (completed in 2021) under construction in the background.

The building programmes to the southwest are a reminder of the transformations under way in many of the welfare landscapes in Sweden as densification threatens to change access to urban green commons. In the case of the study area, however, such transformation has not occurred, and the pattern of buildings and open spaces is largely the same as it was in 1967. The one densification initiative in the study area has been the construction, completed in 2021, of a ten-storey municipal rental property on the highest land in the area, to the southwest (Figure 4). This offers views out to the sea to the south and west and across the river to the north. In doing so, it blocks some of the views of the 1967 buildings, but otherwise, positioned between steep rocks and woods and the area's main car park—and somewhat counter-intuitively, given how it dominates the skyline from a distance—it does not significantly change the overall character of the area.

Figure 4. New rental building (164:24) completed in 2021, 1967 buildings to the right.

Within the residential area the outdoor areas were managed by a municipal housing company (MHC) from 1967 until the tenure conversions began in 2006. At that point, a local association was formed, comprising representatives of each of the tenant-owned cooperatives (TOCs) and of the MHC. Thus, instead of the MHC having the budget and responsibility for outdoor areas, there was now both a shared responsibility to contribute financially (proportionally, according to number of apartments), and to participate in decision-making. This meant that representatives attended monthly meetings, and that decisions were then made about which companies to engage for diverse activities such as litter-picking, snow-clearance and grass-cutting in the shared areas. The respective building plots remained the responsibility of the respective TOCs and the MHC.

3. Results

We present our results in terms of the changes in land use and land use management in the area following the tenure conversions, and then we discuss those results with reference to the analytical framework above in order to draw conclusions in relation to outdoor area management in mixed-tenure settings. We present findings related to the outdoor areas of the respective building plot types first before presenting findings related to the shared outdoor areas in the neighbourhood.

3.1. Tenant-Owned Cooperative Building Plots

The TOCs have, to differing degrees, invested in the beautification of their properties and of their outdoor areas. Fifty-year-old concrete walls have been clad in wood, and wooden outdoor furniture has been placed out for the residents. Such initiatives have been relatively uncontroversial and have largely been well-received by residents of all tenure types (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Fifty-year-old blackened concrete walls clad in wood by TOC 164:10.

There have also been two cases where TOCs have chosen to build new fences around portions of their land. Each of these two cases is slightly different. At the northwest corner of the study area, the northern end of TOC 164:12 has enclosed an area to the north and west of the building. This contains a lawn, a barbecue area, and gardens, with a forested slope behind it. The fence is at the side of the building, with an entry gate that is sometimes open and sometimes closed, but during the study period, it was not locked. The boundary is thus marked, but not completely closed. For other residents, it could potentially be noticed by people either using the car parks to the north of the study area or by those walking under the tunnel under the ring road on the way to the bus station and shopping centre (Figure 6). However, during the course of this research, we did not encounter complaints about this fencing in of the TOC land. The only issues that arose in relation to this garden were some internal conflicts within the TOC regarding who on the committee would be in charge of it.

The other case of a fence being built around a TOC property was more prominent. The south end of TOC 164:13 was enclosed by a two-metre fence with a gate that was always kept locked. Within the fence was an outdoor area, which included a barbecue area and a lawn, and which was illuminated after dark (Figure 7). This fence did arouse some reactions. One respondent in particular, a long-term resident of the area, expressed outrage, arguing that all of the land in the area should be open to everybody, and wondering why the TOC residents felt they had the authority to fence off land. He felt, quite viscerally, that this was offensive, and that the residents of the TOC were trying to demonstrate that they were better than other people in the area. On the other hand, other long-term residents, including those living in the rented apartments overlooking the enclosed barbecue area, saw it as unproblematic. They said that people who lived there had bought the property and were free to do as they wished with it, and they thought that the barbecue created a good impression. Meanwhile, there was a rapid turnover of residents in the study area. Only about one in six residents remained of those who were living in the area during the 2006–2008 tenure conversions. For newer residents, the vast majority in the area, the

enclosure was part of the established landscape. Some people we spoke to were unaware of the location of the enclosed barbecue site, even though they walked past it every day (Figure 7). Based on the strength of the negative reaction of the few people who disapproved of the enclosure, it is clear that the time when a fence is constructed might be a sensitive one. This might be of interest to any planner or policy-maker who sees the mixing of tenures as a means of countering segregation and promoting social cohesion.

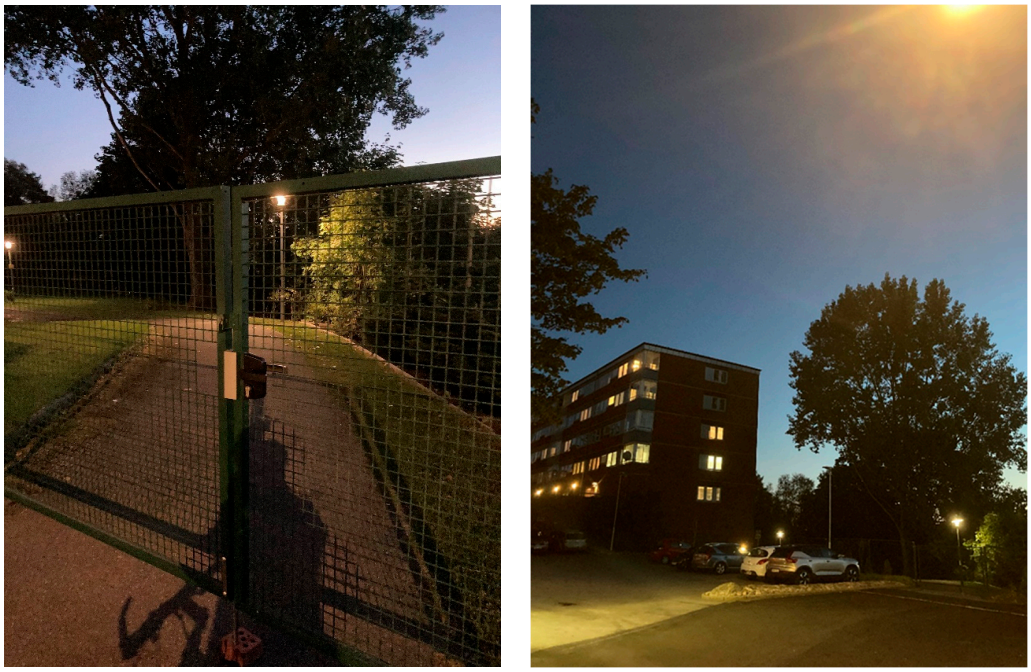

Figure 6. Gate at north of 164:13 is shut but not locked, and discreet beside the car park.

Figure 7. The barbecue with a two-metre fence south of 164:13 is openly visible, but some residents do not notice it as they walk past it.

One aspect of the landscape that perhaps contributed to the quality of the TOC building plots was that all have steeply sloped woodland directly behind them (except 164:11, which

has a partly wooded courtyard that is enclosed by a car park to the north). The woodland creates a sense of being close to "nature", while the slopes mean that this is unlikely to be threatened by planners seeking to fit in more buildings and functions (Figure 8).

Figure 8. TOC buildings backing onto steep wooded slopes behind 164:13 (**left**) and 164:12 (**right**).

3.2. Municipal Rental Building Plots

For a Swedish reader, it will perhaps not be considered surprising that the TOCs in the study area tended to invest in beautifying their properties and on occasion built fences around some or all of their land. However, we also found that resident-led beautification and fence construction were present among the municipal rental buildings.

The two largest buildings in the study area, 164:14 and 164:15, are both horse-shoe shaped and therefore create a large, semi-public area. To the north, 154:14 contains a steep slope, with six-storey buildings at the bottom of the slope and three-storey buildings to the south at the top of the slope. The large trees in the centre of the area, a picnic bench at the centre, and the lawns around are all taken care of by the municipal housing company (Figure 9). In contrast, inside the southern courtyard, there is a well-maintained garden with a gazebo in the centre where residents can sit and eat or socialise in the warmer months. Tenants who were gardening enthusiasts had approached the MHC about gardening in the courtyard and were provided with seeds and tools. Eventually, the MHC also began paying two of the residents to maintain the gardens. During the research period, a number of residents mentioned that these two residents are now becoming older and that the arrangement may not continue if nobody else is interested in taking over. Nevertheless, throughout the five-year study period, the gardens remained well-maintained and attractive—a number of visitors familiar with Swedish residential areas commented on how it reminded them of the gardens that they would typically associate with TOCs (Figure 10).

Figure 9. The inner yard of 164:14 is on a steep slope and dominated by trees.

Figure 10. The inner yard of 164:15 contains a well-kept garden that was established by its residents.

Similarly, the L-shaped building at the south of the study area, which was also a rental property until 2021, has a fenced in area at the western end where a resident had approached the MHC about having an enclosed garden, and at the southern end, there is a well-maintained terraced garden that was also established by residents asking for materials from the MHC and then developing it themselves (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Garden established by MHC tenants south of 164:16 and 164:17.

What became apparent, in other words, was that resident initiatives to improve the appearance of the neighbourhood were not just restricted to the homeowning members of the TOCs but could also be found amongst the MHC tenants. This undermined the notion that the "mix" of tenure types was a mix of fundamentally different classes of people with fundamentally different preferences and practices with regard to outdoor area use. Nevertheless, there was also evidence that taking the step to ownership did awaken the idea of enclosure; following the conversion of 164:17 in 2021, an association was formed in 164:15 and took steps towards purchasing their building from the MHC. This was ultimately stopped by a municipal political decision, and at the end of the research period, tenants were hoping for a change in municipal government in the future that would reverse this decision. However, some residents who had hoped that 164:15 would become a TOC discussed the expectation that if they succeeded, they would probably fence in their well-maintained garden.

A special case regarding the municipal housing plots in the study area was the 10-storey building, 164:25, erected in 2021. In contrast to the rest of the area where the housing is integrated into a landscape of lawns, playgrounds and trees, this building was built between the large asphalt car park to its south and the steep wooded slope to its north. On the south side of the building, facing out over the car park. there was a paved area about five metres wide with some inlaid shrubs and plants (Figure 12). Additionally, there was a secluded little lawn at the west end of the building with a picnic bench, though the only time we saw this being used was by young men in the evening who appeared to be conducting furtive drug trading. The main outside activities we saw connected to this building were a few regular dog-walkers who went from in front of the building and through the residential areas. Otherwise, no significant contact was seen or reported between the residents of this building and the people in the rest of the area. With rents in the new MHC building being about fifty percent higher than in the rest of the study site,

this was a potentially interesting development from a social mix viewpoint. However, both survey results and interviews supported our observations that (in contrast to the remainder of the area that was designed and built in 1967) there is very little interaction between the residents of this block and the rest of the neighbourhood.

Figure 12. Outdoor areas under densification: the paved terrace with trees and shrubs in front of the newly built (2021) MCH building, 164:25.

3.3. Shared Outside Areas

While the building plot spaces were generally well-kept but not always well-used, some of the shared outdoor spaces in the neighbourhood were much busier, especially in the relatively warm and sunny summer months.

The main shared outdoor space in the neighbourhood is towards the north of the study area, bordered to the west, north, and east by TOCs (164:12, 164:11, and 164:10) and to the south by a municipal housing block (164:14). During observations on sunny days during July–September 2023, it was not unusual to see between 30 and 60 people of all ages in this area (Figure 13).

To the west and centre of this outdoor area was a football pitch where children of all ages played during evenings and weekends, often with adults. To the east and centre was a play area with swings, climbing frames, picnic tables, and a bronze statue of a woman bending to a child. This playground was also frequented both by groups of children playing unsupervised and by younger children and toddlers with adults. On the grass areas around the football pitch and the playground were more picnic benches, also used by different people (there did not appear to be "regulars" on any of these).

Immediately in front of the rental houses, there was a regular group of mainly middle-aged and older women who often brought chairs and sat outside socialising. About twenty metres away, on the other side of the asphalt road that passes in front of the buildings and around the grassed areas, there was a similarly middle-aged group of men. Often, in the late afternoons in summer, they improvised barbecues here. It was these men who alerted us to the fact that the local Pentecostal church come to this spot every Thursday evening, attracting adults and children to play games and drink coffee and tea.

Figure 13. The asphalt football pitch on a summer's evening (**above**) and on a rainy winter's day (**below**).

For most of the residents of the area that we encountered, in both tenure types, the football pitch and the surrounding area are seen as the heart of the neighbourhood, where people are sociable, and children play. This was reflected in an article written in the city newspaper by a journalist living in the study area who wrote fondly of it as a place where his children could run and play without making prior arrangements [44]. Included in the praise of this central area were residents who themselves did not participate in the picnics and football but regarded them as part of what gave the area its character and made it a good place to live. By contrast, there were other residents, mostly from the TOCs in the south of the study area, who regarded the football pitch as a place where less-desirable people and activities were to be found. Similar to Chaskin and Joseph's respondent in Chicago [37], they assumed (quite wrongly, in some cases) that the people who gathered to socialise in front of the rental properties near the football pitch were welfare-dependent municipal tenants.

During the study period, there seemed to be a mismatch between the way that the football pitch and surrounding area was regarded by most people and the way that it was discussed in the association responsible for outdoor areas. At the association meetings, the football pitch was regarded as problematic, and alternatives were considered for how it could be replaced with a calmer, quieter space [45]. This may have partly reflected a democratic deficit in the structure of the association, as it only contained resident representatives from the TOCs and not from the MHC tenants. However, the democratic deficit did not

only apply to municipal tenants. It was notable during interviews that TOC members apart from those who had sat on the steering committee of the outdoor areas association also expressed ignorance regarding how decisions were made about outdoor areas and who had the authority to make decisions about them.

Among the outdoor areas association representatives we met, it was generally felt that it functioned well enough, notwithstanding some structural tensions. One of the MHC staff involved in the association felt that it was time-consuming that everything had to be negotiated in meetings, and also that the imbalance in competence meant that the TOC meetings tended to want to delegate tasks to the MHC rather than taking their share of responsibility. There were also tensions regarding spending decisions, as TOCs tended to support investment in areas adjacent to their own buildings but were reluctant to spend on sites further away from their buildings. Meanwhile, two dissenting voices came from steering committee members of one TOC that felt that it would be much better if the municipal parks department had responsibility for the outdoor areas within the study area. They felt that the interactions with the MHC and with the other TOCs were too time-consuming and difficult, and they would have preferred to have this burden taken from them[1].

Beyond the main football pitch area, there were other shared outdoor areas. The spaces between 164:14 and 164:15 and between 164:15 and 164:17 were physically very similar. And, up until 2021 (when 164:17 was converted to a TOC), they were also similarly bordered on both sides by rental properties. Both had asphalt footpaths in front of the houses with an island of grass in the centre, as well as trees and gardens in front of the houses. In the northernmost of the two areas, however, there were a few young families with small children who were often out with each other both in this space and on a little playground with swings at the northeast corner of 164:15 (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Swing set at northeast corner of 164:15 where children from 164:14 frequently play on the swings, often with adults watching.

Another shared space that was used more was in the south of the area between 164:17 and the TOC at 164:16. To the south is a quiet lawn and garden which is not used, often but north of that, there is a ramp that separates the TOC at a higher level from a playground at the lower level where a local artist painted a mural and there are swings and a slide (Figure 15). Occasionally, older people sat out either on chairs or in wheelchairs in front of the houses, and there were often children playing whilst the adults accompanying them stood and chatted.

Figure 15. Play area in front of 164:14 with swings and a mural by a local artist.

4. Discussion

Given earlier studies of outdoor areas in mixed-tenure settings, especially in stigmatised urban settings, this seemed to be a relatively harmonious case. Most of the time, during our observations, it was difficult not to think that if the architects who had designed the area could see it, they would be delighted to see their plans come to fruition. The area included children playing, women and men sitting at picnic tables or in front of houses socialising, people coming and going at all hours appearing relaxed and comfortable in the surroundings (notwithstanding the struggle for some as they walked up the steep paths to the area with shopping or after work).

From a *nested commons* perspective, only two of the six tenant-owned cooperatives (TOCs) had attempted to physically enclose their land. Furthermore, these were only partial enclosures, which meant that the fronts of the respective buildings were still open and accessible to the rest of the neighbourhood. This meant that the fencing was not experienced as an affront in the way that was reported in the Kviberg case in Gothenburg [18,19]. This also meant that the TOCs were not becoming small, gated commons of the sort documented in previous studies, especially in the city of Malmö [24,31,46]. Overall, then, the limited extent and discreet nature of the enclosed nested commons created by the TOCs meant that they had not significantly encroached on the available neighbourhood commons.

From a *gentrification of outdoor areas* viewpoint, the TOCs have been able to pursue their own agendas of improving the look of their properties and making them attractive to new buyers without needing to curb the activities of renters. Flower beds have been planted and maintained and wooden cladding has been overlaid on old concrete walls, but these beautification activities have largely been interpreted as being for the common good. The residents tended to see this as making the neighbourhood a little better for everybody. Part of the explanation for this may be that these physical improvement activities were not unique to the owner–occupiers. Municipal renters have also been actively taking initiatives to beautify their outdoor areas; this reinforces a general paradox (or irony) in the research literature, namely that tenure and social "mix" policies seem to work best when there is a smaller difference between the groups that are being mixed [47]. This may be somewhat time and site specific; Sweden's universalist approach to housing may mean that its public housing residents have been more socially and economically mixed than countries which have used public housing as a residual category for households who cannot access the housing market. However, researchers have long noted the tendency towards Swedish public housing becoming residualised as policy has favoured home ownership [48–51], so a case like ours where public housing is in an attractive location (close to both the ocean and to a shopping centre and transport hub) may be a laggard or exception to this rule.

Meanwhile, there were some indications that notwithstanding the everyday harmony and the apparently well-functioning outdoor areas, some TOC members were beginning to articulate a preference for the calmer, quieter outdoor spaces that are often associated with homeowners in the literature [23,37]. This was particularly the case in some of the discussions in the outdoor area association, echoing earlier studies that have found that outdoor area management decisions are often weighted in favour of homeowners and against public housing tenants [25], with decision-making bodies often including homeowner representatives but not public housing tenants [37].

Regarding the *smorgasbord of places*, the tenure conversions in our study area had not significantly transformed what was on offer for the residents. The football pitch and the three small playgrounds in the area remained intact, so all of the residents still had good access to the children's playing areas. In contrast with earlier studies reporting densification, the building of the 91 flats in the ten-storey building at 164:25 had not itself impinged on existing green spaces, wedged as it was between a car park and some little-used woods. Nor had the arrival of the new tenants noticeably intensified competition for outdoor areas, in contrast to earlier studies where space was more limited and competition more direct [25]. This is partly a product of the steep slopes up to the study area which hinder more extensive densification, but it may also be attributed to the permissive approach of the municipal housing company (MHC). Among the smorgasbord of places that exist are small gardens tucked away in courtyards or behind buildings which have been a product of tenant suggestions being welcomed by the MHC, something that earlier research suggests is not uncommon among the large MHCs in Gothenburg [52].

5. Conclusions

Inspired by the lack of explicit attention to outdoor areas in the literature on tenure mix initiatives, we examined how the sale of public housing to residents in a Swedish neighbourhood labelled "vulnerable to crime" had influenced outdoor areas. Previous literature had identified the tendency for owner–occupiers to try to enclose their own land (what we have termed *nested commons*), thus exacerbating segregation within neighbourhoods. Previous studies had also identified tendencies of owner–occupiers to try to curb outdoor activities by renters, as the owner–occupiers preferred quietness and calm (what we have termed *gentrification of outdoor areas*). One of the key factors alleviating these risks identified in earlier studies was the availability of a range of private, semi-private, semi-public, and public spaces (that we have termed a *smorgasbord of places*). In our case study neighbourhood, we found that outdoor areas were largely harmonious. There had been attempts to enclose the TOC space, but these were very limited and located discreetly

beside or behind buildings. And there were some discussions of limiting outdoor activity by renters (for example, by changing the use of the football pitch in the heart of the neighbourhood), but these discussions were not widely known about and had not resulted in any changes. In our analysis, the general absence of tension could further be attributed to two related factors, one social and one physical. Socially, there was not a sharp divide between owner–occupiers and renters. There was more variety within each tenure type than there was between the two tenure types. Physically, the residents retained good access to a wide variety of outdoor areas. This was partly due to the location, just four kilometres from the ocean with beaches, coastal walks, and cycle paths, but also—perhaps crucially—because the original design of the 1967 estate, with its generous affordances of play areas, parkland and woods within the neighbourhood remained largely intact.

These favourable factors may be assumed to apply to most public housing, especially in the context of trends towards densification and residualisation noted above. This being the case, we would recommend that policymakers and practitioners pay close attention to outdoor area planning when embarking on mixed-tenure initiatives. The warning from the literature is that mixed-tenure initiatives, rather than integrating an area into the broader urban system, may instead cause or aggravate segregation *within* the area that is being "mixed". More specifically, introducing islands of private ownership may provide an incentive for the erection of physical fences that create social division and negative feelings. Based on our case, we offer the following recommendations to policymakers and practitioners contemplating tenure mix initiatives in public housing neighbourhoods:

1. Proceed based on the assumption that existing outdoor areas may be contributing to a high quality of life (this may entail ignoring routine stigmatisation of outdoor spaces in public housing areas and looking at the specific situation of the neighbourhood under consideration).
2. Take advice from current residents on what is valuable in the landscape and why; pay particular attention to convivial outdoor activities; and explicitly consult on the issues of fencing and enclosures.
3. When selling to either tenants or to developers, consider the option of including a clause that restricts/forbids the right to erect fences.
4. If some fencing/enclosure is desired, look for ways that this can be added "behind" buildings, such that barriers are not erected between tenure types.
5. If some fencing/enclosure is desired, consider options for offering it as a possibility for public housing tenants as well as for private tenure forms.

None of the above is easy. Previous research suggests that there are likely trade-offs between land and property prices in nested commons and the larger-scale (neighbourhood) good, and that orienting institutions to serve the latter will be challenging [25,37]. And, notwithstanding some positive experiences, it may be difficult to engage residents in meaningful democratic participation in the management of outdoor areas [52]. Nevertheless, as the Kviberg case shows, and as some of the below-surface tensions in our case support, prioritising the common good and carefully consulting and planning outside areas when embarking on tenure mix initiatives may be necessary to keep barbed wire out of mixed tenure landscapes [20].

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Note

[1] This was in slight contrast to representatives of the MHC who had been required to deal with complaints about uncut grass. They found that the municipal parks authority delegated work to local contractors, and that it was often difficult and time-consuming to track down the right person at the authority to identify the relevant contractor, and then to contact the contractor.

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