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Organizing cross-sectoral housing provision planning: settings, problems and knowledge

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ABSTRACT
In the governance of housing provision, the public sector is considered unable efficiently to manage such problems through the traditional bureaucratic organizations and associated governing tools. Instead, municipalities are expected to engage in collaborative processes across sectors and with external stakeholders, with the overarching objective to deliver more efficient planning outcomes. As the processes are carried out across sectors, it opens up the opportunity to privilege certain sectors' perspectives and marginalize others. By drawing from Mouffe's agonistic political theories, this article makes an empirical account of the political in organizing cross-sectoral collaborative planning in Swedish municipalities, with the empirical example of developing municipal programmes for housing provision. The article concludes that social service is severely marginalized in what is generally a depoliticized housing provision planning process. Underpinning the collaboration is the conceptualizing of housing provision as primarily a general deficit in constructing housing. Primarily organizing objectivist knowledge, housing provision is constructed as a technical and procedural matter rather than ideological and political. Through such organizing principles, the overarching housing provision problem remains undealt with, e.g. how do we provide housing to 'all' our citizens?

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1. Introduction

Swedish municipal housing provision constitutes a collaborative governing matter between sectors within the municipality, and between the municipality, municipal housing companies and other private actors. The Swedish municipal housing responsibility act (Lag 2000:1383) requires municipalities to plan through 'guidelines', as well as to 'promote' and 'facilitate', so that necessary housing will be brought about and therein accommodate the housing needs of the citizens. The private sector is envisaged as the main provider of

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housing (SOU 2018:35). The municipalities are, as such, seemingly dependent on private actors and a functioning housing market for efficiently being able to deliver their housing responsibility. Governing through such soft tools calls for new collaborative efforts in the municipalities to integrate perspectives from a range of actors and sectors such as social services, municipal housing companies, and property-, planning- and development administrations, for the development of policy frameworks (cf. Stead and Meijers 2009) that recognize the housing needs of their citizens. In 2015, the law was reinforced requiring all municipalities to provide a separate housing provision programme that sets out the housing needs within the municipality and the comprehensive measures for accommodating such needs (Granath Hansson 2019). Since the housing provision act calls upon municipalities to work in a more integrated fashion across sectors, areas of expertise and responsibilities (Boisseuil 2019; cf. Healey 2006; Schmitt and Wiechmann 2018), it has contributed to opening up 'new' planning spaces in-between the more formal ones within the municipalities. These spaces are not conceptualized to replace the formal, but rather to be mutually constitutive where '[o]ne cannot work without the other' (Haughton and Allmendinger 2008). The regulatory planning that is part of the formal bureaucratic organization remains consequently as a planning activity (Allmendinger and Haughton 2009), but the expectations placed on municipalities to modernize their processes to better respond to contemporary societal problems – such as the wide-spread problem of housing shortage (Granath Hansson 2019; cf. Wetzstein 2017) – have generated a stipulated plethora of new processes, strategies, plans, roles and forms of organizing in the municipalities alongside the more traditional activities (Allmendinger and Haughton 2010).

This changed governing context of housing provision, in combination with the 'businessfication' of the municipal housing companies (see Grander 2017), is argued as having challenged the Swedish post-war universal housing policy of providing 'good housing for all' (Hedin et al. 2012; Westerdahl 2019), resulting in, amongst other things, segregated access to housing (Grander 2018; Grundström and Molina 2016; Salonen 2015).[1] For example, in a recent regional governmental report, it is stated that the new build rental housing is not affordable for the majority of the households in the Stockholm region, which not only leads to a mismatch between availability and demand but also in sheer numbers – there are simply too few constructions of rental housing (Stockholm Region 2020). Addressing the housing situation is broadly considered an urgent matter in Sweden, not only in the urban growth regions such as Stockholm but in all municipalities regardless of their size and location. In 2019, 240 out of 290 municipalities state that they suffer from a housing shortage (Boverket 2019a), where predominantly affordable housing for groups with low socio-economic status is lacking. The costs for the municipalities (e.g. the social service administrations) to manage housing solutions for these groups are estimated to be 5,3 billion SEK annually (Boverket 2015). Sweden is one of the only countries in Europe without designated social housing sector (cf. Grander 2018).

The so-called 'post-political' planning scholarship has illustrated how the changed governing context of spatial planning operates to circumvent the political dimension, where planning processes operate as a powerful tool in a neoliberal political project (cf. Allmendinger and Haughton 2010; Olesen 2014). Such planning is persuasively presented as a tool that works with the market and other parts of the local government and the citizens rather than regulating them (Allmendinger and Haughton 2010), and represents a process in which 'contestation and conflict is supplanted by consensus-based politics in ways that foreclose

all but narrow debate and contestation around a neoliberal growth agenda' where conflicting positions are not recognized and given a voice (Allmendinger and Haughton 2012, 90–91). In the case of organizing cross-sectoral planning endeavours, where planning processes are carried out across and in-between sectors, it is unclear how and in what arenas deliberation and choice between conflicting alternatives and prioritisations take place, as the informal character of the endeavours opens up the opportunity to privilege certain sectors' perspectives and marginalize others (Allmendinger and Haughton 2010; Haraldsson 2016; Svensson 2019; Van Well and Schmitt 2015). The organizing of cross-sectoral collaboration is 'political' and represents a number of choice-makings, including the ways in which professional cultures and status between sectors and actors are managed.

Much of the post-political literature emanates from planning reforms in the UK, even though other European researchers also identify similar tendencies (cf. Allmendinger, Haughton, and Shephard 2016; Högström, Balfors, and Hammer 2018; Olesen 2014). Research on collaborative planning, in general, focuses on broad participatory processes concerning urban and regional development from which a range of actors (public and private actors, stakeholders and community groups) participate (cf. Healey 2007; Mäntysalo, Kangasoja, and Kanninen 2015). Less attention has been given to empirical research that inquiries into the 'political' in 'organizing' municipal cross-sectoral collaborative planning endeavours (cf. Schmitt and Wiechmann 2018). Since urban planning is expected to coordinate and integrate a wide range of policies that concern space (cf. Andersén 2020; Schmitt and Wiechmann 2018), it is imperative that the political dimensions of organizing such activities are fully interrogated and understood. How is, for example, the choosing of settings, the negotiating between different sectoral interests, the deliberating between alternatives and the prioritizing of knowledge and measures carried out? This is where this article seeks to make its contribution, by its aim to make an account of 'the political' in processes of organizing cross-sectoral collaborative planning in Swedish municipalities, with the empirical example of developing municipal programmes for housing provision. We define cross-sectoral collaborative planning in this article as processes in which participants from different sectors within the municipal administration work together to pursue shared goals.

The article is organized as follows: following this introduction, the Mouffean theoretical perspective and pursued analytical framework comprising three political dimensions of organizing cross-sectoral planning will be outlined. Thereafter, the method and empirical material will be presented which consist of a multi-sited case study of five Swedish municipal housing provision planning processes, to be followed by an analysis of the political dimensions in organizing housing provision planning. The article finishes by concluding that the social service is severely marginalized in a depoliticized housing provision planning process. We furthermore conclude that the housing provision planning process itself is characterized by coordinating departmental work rather than integrating in an effort to develop a joint municipal housing policy.

2. Political dimensions of organizing cross-sectoral collaborative planning – a Mouffean perspective

This article draws from Mouffean agonistic political theory and the conceptualization of 'the political' as choice makings between conflicting alternatives. What it particularly draws from is the recognition of conflicts as key to understanding the formation and

Table 1. Political dimensions of organizing in cross-sectoral collaborative planning and their operationalization.

Political dimensions of organising	Analytical questions
organising settings	What settings are used-and with what objectives are they utilized – in the collaboration?
organising problems	What problem representations underpin the collaboration?
organising knowledge	What knowledge is legitimized and given priority in the collaboration?

development of society, which is here considered unpredictable and contingent in character, thereby being inherently political. Any order is thereby conceived to be derived from 'a choice' between conflicting alternatives whereby decisions have been made in terms of the inclusion and exclusion of possibilities (Mouffe 2005). What however is expressed as something true or given is based on settled hegemonic practices that operate to disguise and foreclose deliberation of conflicting alternatives (Mouffe 2013). Hegemony thus refers to when a 'political' force exercises domination and influence as a result of fixation of norms, values and views about the world that come to represent an objective truth (cf. Torfing 1999). Conflicts can furthermore be understood as antagonism or agonism. A conflict can readily take an antagonistic form if it appears 'as though' that no political choices are at hand, where the only legitimate choice is perceived as given or natural. The conflicting parties in a context of agony instead perceive each other as legitimate, although incapable of finding a rational solution to their conflict. The possibility of agonistic conflicts and deliberation of alternatives should be considered as constituent to democratic practices such as spatial planning (cf. Mouffe 2005).

Organizing cross-sectoral collaborative planning processes constitutes theoretically a number of choice makings between conflicting alternatives, which posit politicians, private actors and governmental sectors in different power relations. Analytically to capture the Mouffean notion of the political in processes of organizing, three interconnected political (conflictual) dimensions of organizing are put forward that – considered together – operate to condition the collaboration in various ways and steer the planning in different directions. First, organizing cross-sectoral collaboration comprises 'the choosing' of settings for interacting (including aims and purposes), which open up specific planning activities and close others. Second, organizing cross-sectoral collaboration comprises joint formulating (e.g. choosing) of problems from which specific planning measures are geared to solve, and third, organizing cross-sectoral collaboration comprises pursuing and prioritizing (e.g. choosing) particular knowledges that both enable and legitimize specific planning outcomes. Taken together, the organizing of settings, problems and knowledge constitute key political dimensions – e.g. acts of 'choice-making' – in organizing cross-sectoral collaborative planning – that in turn govern what planning solutions are deemed possible. These political dimensions of organizing are described below and summarized in Table 1. A matter that is constructed with no available choices and is appealing to something given, rational or notions of common truths will be referred to as 'depoliticized in the article', and a matter that is constructed with available alternatives is referred to as 'politicized' (cf. Berglund-Snodgrass 2016).

2.1. The first political dimension: organizing settings

The first political dimension of organizing concerns 'the settings', e. g. the spaces and consequent activities in which the planning organizes. These settings can, for example, take

the form of goal-oriented 'projects' (cf. Fred 2018) – where the interaction is limited to the adoption of plans – or the form of strategic operations – where the interaction is on-going and time is allocated depending on the problem(s) at hand (cf. Faludi 2000). The settings also organize types of activities, e.g. ranking different policies, negotiating between policies or measuring effects of policies, but also organize specific roles in the collaboration, e.g. information provider, expert, advocator or partner that posit urban planning and social services in different relationships to each other. What sector is for example granted the role of project leader, and through what activities are the interactions carried out?

The choosing of settings comprises in turn the choosing the overarching objectives of the collaboration, e.g. to cooperate, coordinate or integrate policies (Haraldsson 2016; Stead and Meijers 2009). Cooperation and coordinating stipulate working towards consistency among identified policy fields, e.g.' … a number of departments are responsible for one aspect of the problem or another, but none is responsible for it in its entirety' (Geerlings and Stead 2003). Integrating stipulates the transcendence of institutionally defined policy fields into a new one with one point of responsibility (Stead and Meijers 2009). This points to the overarching objective of the interaction, namely, is it to integrate policies, delineate priorities and make decisions, or coordinate and compile different sectoral policies into one material document (cf. Faludi 2000)? The organizing of settings constitute herein acts of choice-making between conflicting alternatives. This dimension will be operationalized through the following analytical questions: What settings are used, and with what objective are they utilized – in the collaboration?

2.2. The second political dimension: organizing problems

The second interconnected political dimension of organizing concerns 'how problems are represented'. In policy-making processes, there is a strong tendency to define problems as something to be found and picked up 'out there', as something external to the problematizations and proposals of solutions, as something 'waiting to be solved' (Bacchi 2009, 2016). Problems are implicitly produced that comprise (taken for granted or deep seated) assumptions that underpin the proposed changes, as well as possible silences of what needs to be changed (Bacchi 2009). For example, in cross-sectoral planning processes for municipal housing provision, the organizing of the collaboration may be carried out based on the assumption that it is primarily a problem of increasing the general housing supply (e.g. Granath Hansson 2019) – as opposed to, for example, a social welfare issue, or even a broader societal issue of equity – and thus actors from these sectors are gaining space and priority in the planning process, e.g. granted project management leader responsibilities. The 'problems' are constructed as particular kinds of problems within the specific policies and policy proposals and defined by those who have a position of authority that allows them to do so (cf. Foucault 1993). Bacchi (2009, 2016) underlines the need to study the ways policies constitute 'problems', i.e. to study how 'problems are represented'. In this way, local government, through the organizing of the policymaking process, e.g. the cross-sectoral collaborative endeavour of developing housing provision programmes, is seen as creating and producing (i.e. constituting) problems rather than 'reacting' to fixed and identifiable problems. The suggestions of a certain action to fix something points to 'what we think needs to change and hence what we think is problematic – that is, what the "problem" is represented or constituted to be'

(Bacchi 2009, 2016). The organizing of problem representations, e.g. how 'problems' are represented, constitute acts of choice makings between conflicting possibilities of what constitute the housing provision problem. This dimension will be operationalized through the following analytical question: What problem representations underpin the collaboration?

2.3. The third political dimension: organizing knowledge

Drawing from our position on organizing as acts of choice makings, knowledge does not constitute a neutral category that seamlessly is implemented in planning. It is instead organized in specific ways which generate effects for which policies, actions and solutions that are deemed possible (cf. Bacchi 2009; Berglund-Snodgrass 2016, 2017). In the technocratic and rational planning tradition, knowledge based on an objectivist epistemology is organized to rationally identifying (the best) solutions (Davoudi 2011). Here, the emphasis is on instrumentally transforming knowledge into action, in 'a means to an end' fashion (e.g. through scenarios, forecasts, etc.), so as to allow for a rational and scientifically grounded strategy-making process (cf. Davoudi 2011; Healey 2007). Also, this organization of knowledge forms part of what is described as 'evidence-based policy' (Davoudi 2006) that has gained momentum in the Swedish planning context lately (e.g. Forsemalm, Johansson, and Göransson 2019). This rational organization of knowledge renders very similar to the project organization, where goals are set up that can be closely monitored and followed up, as well as evaluated upon (cf. Cicmil and Hodgson 2006), which impacts what knowledge that is granted legitimacy in the planning, e.g. measurable objectivist knowledge (Berglund-Snodgrass 2016). The communicative planning tradition on the other hand, organizes knowledge based on a pluralistic conception, where knowledge is considered to be value-based and part of social relations (Rydin 2007). This tradition emphasizes the importance of also including subjugated or lay knowledge (such as experience-based knowledge drawing from user groups or other stakeholders) for identifying alternative actions and consequent futures based on a communicative rationality (Berglund-Snodgrass 2016; cf. Healey 2007), so as to allow for fair and just planning processes (cf. Sandercock 2003). Since all forms of knowledge do not lend themselves to being directly translated into practice and subsumed under the notion of either technocratic or communicative rationality, organizing knowledge is an (implicit or explicit) act of choice making (Berglund-Snodgrass 2016). This dimension will be operationalized through the following analytical question: What knowledge is legitimized and given priority in the collaboration?

3. Method and empirical material

This study comprises a multiple-case study (cf. Yin 2014), which allows for the investigation of processes of organizing cross-sectoral collaborative planning across a number of different cases. The objective is to identify commonalities, as well as set out differences among the cases. The cases consist of five municipal cross-sectoral collaborative planning processes concerning the development of housing provision programmes. To avoid a focus on the major cities only, we have selected housing provision planning processes in municipalities across Sweden, and of different sizes. We have based our selection on

so-called 'typical and average cases' (Flyvbjerg 2007) that characterize typical processes in Swedish municipalities of different sizes, and they are thus not selected based on representing particularly successful or innovative processes with regards to housing provision planning.

Since we are interested in municipal processes of organizing cross-sectoral collaborative planning, the empirical material consists of interviews with primarily municipal civil servants (urban planners, strategists, heads of administrations, social service) that in various ways have been engaged in the process of developing programmes for housing provision. We have consequently directed our attention to the processes of organizing the planning rather than the outcome (e.g. the housing provision programmes). Next to urban planners, we have specifically chosen to interview representatives from the social services administration, since they have specific responsibility for the social groups that are identified as having the most urgent housing need (Boverket 2019a). In one of the cases, an interview was carried out with the CEO of a municipal housing company. The interviews concerned the ways in which the process for developing housing provision programmes was organized, and their role and contribution in the process. The interviews ($n = 17$) were between 30 and 45 minutes long and were recorded and thereafter transcribed. They were carried out between February 2019 and February 2020. The interviewees were granted anonymity.

The procedure of analysis was as follows. First, a general reading of the transcripts was carried out, thereafter a process of coding and (re)coding the material according to the analytical questions. During this coding process, we specifically paid attention to how the dimensions of organizing posited the social service administration and the planning and development administrations in various (power) relations to one another. To give justice to the empirical material at large, we consciously looked for themes and counter themes, to illuminate ruptures and contrasts in the empirical material. Excerpts from interviews presented in the analytical chapter have been translated from Swedish to English by the first author.

3.1. Empirical context of the statutory municipal responsibility to develop housing provision programmes

In Sweden, spatial planning constitutes a decentralized activity, where municipalities have monopoly on planning and development through detail planning and building control but also through long-term comprehensive land use planning (as regulated by the Swedish Planning and Building Act). Providing housing provision programmes constitute furthermore a municipal statutory requirement and is regulated by law (Housing Provision Act – Lag 2000:1383). The programmes are supposed to set out municipal priorities and directions for action when it comes to providing housing to its residents (Boverket 2016e). According to the Housing Provision Act (Lag 2000:1383), the aim of housing provision planning is 'to create preconditions for everyone to live in good housing and to promote so that suitable measures for housing provision is prepared and carried out'.

Even though the Housing Provision Act prescribes that all municipalities are obliged to prepare such documents – as a way to force municipalities to strategically work with housing provision questions – not all municipalities take on the work. In 2019, 261 of 290 municipalities in Sweden state they have adopted programmes for housing provision

(Boverket 2019b). The reasons that municipalities state for not developing such policies are manifold, for example, a lack of resources, the relatively small size of the municipality or that the politicians can't agree on suitable measures (Boverket 2019b).

What are municipalities expected to do as part of the planning? The National Board for Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket) – which is a national administrative authority for matters concerning, for example, spatial planning, housing and the financing of housing – prescribes that the planning is about analysing and evaluating the need for housing based on the population in the municipality, as well as setting out the objectives and goals for accommodating the needs (Boverket 2019b). Such work consequently stipulates that politicians make decisions and priorities of measures making sure that the housing needs are accommodated for, e.g. providing 'a politically well-founded housing strategy' (Boverket 2016d).

The cross-sectoral character of the endeavour is also emphasized (Boverket 2018), and further amplified by highlighting interconnected laws to the Housing Provision Act. In, for example, the Social Service Act (Lag 2001:453), it is prescribed that the social services administration should partake in the planning to make sure that the needs of specific groups are accounted for in the process. Many municipalities appear to previously have integrated the housing provision responsibilities into other realms of work such as comprehensive planning – but are now expected to set out strategies for this responsibility in one separate document to be adopted by the municipal assembly each term of office (Boverket 2016a).

After having set out the empirical material and its context, we will now move on to analysing processes of organizing in cross-sectoral planning processes for developing housing provision programmes.

4. Organising housing provision planning in Swedish municipalities

Here, we present our analysis of organizing cross-sectoral collaborative planning, with the empirical example of developing housing provision programmes. The analysis is organized by the analytical questions presented in the theoretical section.

4.1. Organising settings for technocratic planning activities

The processes of developing municipal programmes for housing provision are organized in the majority of the municipalities as a 'project group work' with a clearly assigned 'project leader' (municipal process, 1, 2 and 5). The work is commissioned by the municipal executive administration to the urban planning departments. 'The project leader' is often a civil servant with '-strategist' in their job titles, e.g. urban development strategist or the like. In these cases, representatives from the various sectors within the municipal organization at large are included in the process:

> For a very long time, 15–20 years, this has been a project group work. And I've been the project manager. And I have called in a group that consists of, partly other units within our department, so it is partly the urban planning department with one representative or two. And then we have, traffic and land where we have the living environment, parks and that bit. And then we have the construction and also the environment, I think. Sometimes our own property management unit, which provides premises for certain specific housing.

> Then we have the social services and then we have the care administration and then we have our municipal housing company. Now I think I got everyone. (Strategist, Urban planning department, municipal process 2)

In one of these cases (municipal process 5), the process was explicitly described in terms of a client (the municipal executive administration) and provider (urban planning department) with a steering group and control group, echoing the language coupled with private sector managerialism (cf. Fred 2018). In another case, the project is held together and project-managed directly by the strategic planning unit that is part of the municipal executive administration (municipal process 1). As the project leadership is granted to the strategic planning units (that are responsible for land development), it gives these sectors a specific mandate to organize the process.

In two of the cases, the process appears to organize a short and concise 'one or two man show' rather than as a collaborative endeavour (municipal process 3 and 4). Next to formal points of contacts, 'informal conversations' with representatives from various sectors, such as social service or the municipal housing companies, are referred to as ways of retrieving information about the various sectors' activities. This process organizes the social service actor as a 'provider of information', as 'someone one can ask' (head of social services department, municipal process 3) or as 'expert' (representative from the social services department, municipal process 4).

> We are not a big organization. I spoke a little with [head of technical department], [CEO of municipal housing company] and [head of the environmental and construction department] and a little with [head of social service]. […] And then just write. Like that's it, nothing more to it. (Head of economy, municipal executive office municipal process 3)

In the majority of the cases (municipal processes 2,3, 4 and 5), the settings are organized to facilitate the coordination of the different sectors' policies and compile them into one comprehensive document, rather than integrate policies into one housing provision policy. This means that the processes are organized to coordinate the work of the different 'silos' rather than undo the boundaries (de-silo) and develop joint integrated work. The interaction is at large carried out through regular 'meetings' which constitute the primary setting from which information is gathered and shared between the members of the project group, as well as the settings from which coordination between sectors takes place.

The settings for interactions between civil servants and politicians are organized differently in the cases. In one case, the project leader brings forward the sensitivity of the housing issue, that the politicians don't want to appear to make any ideological priorities between measures, and thereby hand over to the civil servants to prioritize within their sectors' budgets respectively:

> [It] has been sensitive to us because we have a housing provision program that is linked to the annual needs analysis and it has been sensitive to send up some kind of action list to politically approve. So, it has been organised directly under our units' budgets. […] It became too much and I think it became ideological that 'that part we should prioritize over that part.' So, they put it somewhere a little more on the civil servants to prioritize. (Project leader, municipal executive office, municipal process 1)

The political dimension of prioritizing between measures is in this case displaced from the realm of politicians to the realm of civil servants. The regular meetings between the civil

servants within the municipal organization thereby constitute the setting for making priorities between conflicting alternatives. These meetings are brought forward by the project leader to be open and inclusive e.g. including multiple points of views and points of departure, whereas actors representing the social sectors are less inclined to sign up to such a description, suggesting that there are implicit boundaries of what housing needs that can be brought up for discussion. In this case, the process organizes the social service administration as an 'advocate' of the sector's interests and negotiates with other sectors about what should be listed in the programme at large:

> It is quite difficult to gain support for these questions. […] There is no incentive in any municipal operation to work on these issues. […] We bring out the needs and say, 'this is what we need to have,' and then it is the question of what is allowed to be written down in the program and what may not be written down in the program. Who should read the program and who should not read the program? […] But I mean, things like that, you can talk about low-threshold housing for people with addiction problems, for example. How can you, as an addict, get your first accommodation and then be able to make a housing career and get your own contract and stuff. One deletes it, one doesn't want it. One doesn't want to look at those issues. (Head of social services department, municipal process 1)

In the quotation above, the representative from the social service administration stresses the difficulty getting their needs recognized in the process, and that certain 'housing needs' simply are removed. The social service appears to have little influence in setting the agenda for the planning, but such marginalization can also be connected to not fitting into the technocratic activities which the planning organizes. In the housing provision planning process, civil servants are engaged in 'ranking needs and measures in excel spreadsheets' (municipal process 5). Here, processes of making priorities are presented as a rational technocratic endeavour, where priorities in each individual sector should be ranked by the civil servants on a declining scale in relation to possible consequences:

> Now they [the departments] have to prioritize, one: we are breaking laws and regulations, if we do not get this, we have someone who takes us […]. So, they have to prioritize, the most prioritized project they have and then on a downward scale, and the consequences described, what if we do not get this, then you have a basis for decision making, one hasn't had that before. (Head of urban planning, municipal executive administration, municipal process 5)

As the quotation highlights, what is not directly regulated by law (with monetary consequences for the municipalities, such as fines) will get low priority and thus not urgently acted upon. Since no penalties will be issued if failing to accommodate this housing need, it will be less prioritized. This is a very effective way of marginalizing the housing needs which are not explicitly covered by any law. Another activity that civil servants are engaged in is using their discretion to prioritize order of work. Here urban planners prioritise what plans to prepare according to certain aspired for ratio between forms of lease in a given urban development area, e.g. developers with the 'right' form of lease will be prioritized (head of urban planning department, municipal process 5). The urban planners use their discretionary power to make decisions that will influence what types of housing gets priority in the municipality.

> [W]e have a lot of plans that need to be prepared, so we can prioritize based on where we see our needs. That we prepare those plans first where we see that we have a big need. If there is

> now a need to build rental housing, it could be our municipal company or a private property owner who wants to do this, then maybe it will have a higher priority than the one who wants to build something else. (Head of urban planning department, municipal process 5)

One setting for interaction between the civil servants and elected politicians, is 'the workshop'. It constitutes a space for politicians to raise and respond to questions and discuss matters with the civil servants:

> [T]hen we had this workshop with the politicians. […] We had stations [where the politicians] had to walk around and discuss for a while in each focus area and answer the questions we had. Then they got to make remarks and raise comments too, but it was put in place to get guidance on the problem areas we identified. Should we do this or that? […] I always think there has been a political consensus, there has been no difference between the political blocks. And we change the majority fairly often in this municipality. (strategist, urban development, municipal process 2)

In the quotation above, it is suggested by the project leader that they sought guidance from the politicians on how to go about certain difficult issues, but also that it didn't matter what the political majority was, there was a conceived political consensus 'that we all agree' on what the municipal objectives are. This notion of perceived 'consensus' around housing was also raised as a matter in the municipal process five. Since the consensus is not formulated around actions points connected to regulations or to a budget – it doesn't represent any significant political commitment. This perceived consensus based politics suggests that housing provision is approached as a technical and procedural matter (e.g. granting planning and building permits) on the one hand, and following current laws and regulations on the other hand (e.g. providing housing for people with special needs), and not as a deliberative matter about what overarching housing measures and investments to account for. Such processes disguise therein alternatives but also foreclose debates about what should be done in making sure that all citizens will be provided with housing.

In summary, the settings for planning are primarily organized through three types of settings with the primary objective of compiling the different sectors policies into one comprehensive document, rather than delineating joined up policies for housing provision. The project leadership is granted to civil servants from planning offices. The delineating of priorities between conflicting alternatives are displaced from the realm of politicians to the realm and discretion of civil servants, where they employ different technocratic procedures in rationalizing their undertakings. The process organizes the social services department as 'information provider' or 'advocator' in the collaborations, whom are at large severely marginalized in the housing provision planning processes. Technocratic planning appears here as representing a hegemonic point of departure in the collaboration.

4.2. Organising housing provision as a problem of constructing general housing

In the majority of the cases, the different sectors are responsible for writing up – or reporting – their specific responsibilities for municipal housing provision. The planning for housing provision ends up as a series of problem representations of various housing needs, e.g. the housing problem for elderly or for people with special needs. Since the

planning consists of a compilation of different needs based on the different sectors understanding of their different responsibilities, there is no collaboration that seeks to integrate policies across the sectors for making sure that no housing needs are trapped between the silos (e.g. policy integration, cf. Haraldsson 2016; Stead and Meijers 2009). Even though the collaboration in many ways are based on a multitude of problem representations (e.g. providing special housing for elderly and for people with special needs), there is one overarching problem that underpins the collaboration, that is the understanding of housing provision as a problem of 'a general deficit in constructing housing', and the measures to solve this is to facilitate construction of new housing in general, e.g. granting planning and building permissions, and allocating land to private developers. Through such a problem representation, the focus in the collaboration is various forms of enabling albeit traditional regulatory work rather than deliberating general and overarching welfare questions, e.g. how do we provide our citizens, and especially the ones with low socio-economic status, with housing and favourable living conditions. The state allocated building subsidies between 2016 and 2018 to municipalities who had, amongst other things, adopted programmes for housing provision. These subsidies were a major push factor for municipalities to develop these programmes, but constituted also an organizing principle as to what realm was granted leadership:

> The assignment was given to the municipal executive committee, so we were responsible for holding together and organising the issue, but the leadership was granted to the urban development department. This, in turn, had to do with the state subsidy, the construction bonus. […] And in order to manage it, we had to politically and due to lack of time develop these guidelines in a number of weeks to make decisions in the relevant committees to prepare for the year. […] (Strategist, city executive office, municipal process 4)

Even though the executive office is responsible and accountable for-, and commissions the housing provision planning, the development units are simply and seemingly uncomplicatedly granted project leadership since they are considered the administration that enables housing development (strategist, city executive office, municipal process 4). Many of the civil servants do however stress 'that it shouldn't matter since we collaborate' (strategist, urban development unit, municipal process 2) or that it 'should be everyone's responsibility but it doesn't work practically' (head of unit, Social service department, municipal process 1). So on one level, housing provision planning is problematized as a greater societal and welfare matter that concerns all administrations within the municipality, and on another level, it is concretized as a matter of enabling for and regulating development (granting building and planning permissions or land allocation) or as a matter of providing housing in accordance with various legislation (e.g. extra care housing, special needs housing). Since municipalities at large are supposed to carry out housing provision through various forms of enabling work, the representatives from the planning sectors describe how they carry out analyses of various housing districts by, for example, calculating ratios between different forms of tenures, and identifying spaces for development:

> Not that complicated. What plans are appropriate and where do we have our development rights. What would we like and stuff like that […] We did analyses in the different districts. We have not even built a road or excavated for water or waste, because there has been no interest in developing. We have also done analysis on what we call gap-plots. Plots that are unsold in other already developed areas. (Head of the technical department, municipal process 3)

Representatives from the social service administrations primarily describe that they report to the project leader their current undertakings in regard to housing provision, e.g. what possibilities there are for the so called vulnerable groups to access housing (for example, offering a percentage of the total amount of housing in the municipal housing company) or which housing for specific groups (within the broader category of vulnerable groups) exists or should be planned for in new development areas, but they don't report what problems they are facing in regards to housing vulnerable groups or other groups with difficulties to access the housing market. They understood the process to develop a description on work undertaken rather than prescribe ambitions or goals: 'I didn't think that this should be such a document, [but rather] more information about what types of housing we have and that we need to manage it' (representative social services, municipal process 2). Since the focus in the collaboration appears to be on coordinating the different sectors existing policies and not on developing a comprehensive housing provision policy based on what problems they are experiencing, the overarching question of how to provide housing to all citizens appear to slip through the process.

In one case, the head of the social service administration stresses that it is specifically those with the weakest position in society (e.g. people with addiction, as well as people with mental ill-health) that no municipality wants to address in their planning, raising questions of 'for whom do we build' or even 'for whom is the society for?'

> But no one wants to do this. There is no incentive in any municipal activity to work with these issues. […] If you have an intellectual disability, or [in need of] elderly care you have easier because there are groups that are stronger, which can push the questions themselves. But it is difficult for addicts or the mentally ill. They don't stand outside the municipality and demonstrate. They often have a very bad network; they don't have parents or relatives who say this is important to us. There is no one who pushes the question for them, they have to do it themselves. Then it's difficult. […] The social services in general cannot take the consequence for a lousy housing policy or a lousy national housing policy, because that is what is happening. Take this city: we are building apartments – a lot and swiftly. A three bed-room flat for seventeen-thousand SEK [a month]- I don't know which groups will get them. Who are we building for? […] I think we have too few of such conversations in municipal organisations because one is too scared to have them. (Head of social services department, municipal process 1)

Since the focus is on coordinating and compiling and not integrating policies, the majority of the civil servants point to their own strategic processes within their respective silos. One representative from the social services department raises that their department undertakes an extensive project for counteracting homelessness within the municipality (representative from social services department, municipal process 4). Another head of the social services department raises that the municipal housing provision programme has nothing to do with their undertakings, there is a difference between their groups' needs and the population at large's needs (head of social services department, municipal process 3). The housing provision problems are consequently organized by the boundaries within the hierarchical silo organization, and carried out in other strategic settings. Taken together, the organizing of problems in housing provision planning reinforces the conceptualization of the planning as primarily a technocratic procedural matter (e.g. granting planning permissions, preparing plans and allocating land for special needs housing and other legislated forms of housing).

In summary, although a plethora of alternative problem representations prevail in the collaboration, the dominant underpinning problem of housing provision is represented as a deficit in constructing housing in general, and not a greater societal and welfare matter. The planning is focused on setting out the conditions for enabling and regulating general construction by granting building and planning permissions or allocating land, and follow the law, e.g. providing housing in accordance with various legislation. The ways in which problems are organized in the collaboration operates to maintain distance and separation between the silos and their different commissions and responsibilities, rather than to integrate and share responsibilities, and furthermore, it operates to reinforce the technocratic approach to municipal housing provision. The organizing of problems in the collaboration operates to further marginalize the social services, but it also marginalizes the housing needs that sit outside existing laws and regulations, e.g. people of all ages with low income.

4.3. Organising knowledge in a technocratic rational planning process

In the processes for developing housing provisions programmes, predominantly one type of knowledge is organized, which is 'measurable knowledge' such as statistics and prognosis on housing needs as well identification of available land. This focus on objectivist knowledge contributes to making housing provision a technocratic rational matter, something that is possible to calculate and instrumentally apply, which also is a common practice within project-based planning at large (Berglund-Snodgrass 2017). Representatives from the social service administrations raise to a lesser degree different groups' housing needs, but rather their operational requirements, aka 'the social service department's needs'. However, they point out the conflict in identifying 'needs', e.g. whose needs are allowed to be brought up in the programme:

> [My role is to] assist with knowledge and statistics and needs and then it will be included in the actual policy proposal. […] Yes, I think it will be straight from the needs of the different operations. The unit manager who is in the working group has contact with the managers here in this building about what your operations need. Current needs and in five years, and that is what flows to the housing provision needs analysis itself, and then all our needs do not become proposals, because it is quite a lot. And then there is a political dimension to the whole thing too. (Head of unit, social services department, municipal process 1)

The social service department's situated knowledge of, for example, managing consequences when the authorities fail to provide adequate housing is not organized in the housing provision planning, but rather knowledge that can be translated into numbers and figures. Such situational knowledge that is not included concern experiences from real-life situations on 'a Friday afternoon at half past four when the social worker meets a family without housing' (Head of unit, social services department, municipal process 1), as well as concern experiences of purchasing apartments or other forms of housing on the open housing market and subletting the housing to people with acute homelessness (municipal process 1 and 6). Solving such acute operative situations is the responsibility of the social service as stipulated by law, making the social service sector an important municipal actor in the overarching municipal housing provision responsibility. Processes such as these prioritize other forms of knowledge that require other forms of representation than numbers and figures.

Some interviewees bring forward value-based knowledge, e.g. ideas, such as, 'what do we want with the city?', 'what type of city does one want to contribute to?', or 'for whom do we plan the city?', and the lack of discussion and deliberation around such issues. In one municipal process, the head of planning raises the importance of enabling citizens to reside in one housing area during the course of their lives (e.g. as a child, parent and older person):

> Yes, they are based a lot on statistics, but we also identify how much is currently being planned in the area, so it is based on facts, of course. And also, what do we want with the town, do we want to give people the opportunity to continue living here and not move simply because they have turned 65? (Head of urban planning department, municipal process 5)

To start the collaboration based on values and ideas, e.g. 'what one wants', is also something that a representative from a municipal housing company raises as important (CEO municipal housing company, municipal process 3), and as something that one can't calculate or describe on the basis of facts, which also appears to have been difficult to use as a starting point in the collaboration:

> I claim that I contributed with that this kind of work is not about calculating out how many apartments to build in each city. One immediately throws oneself into questions where the municipal housing company should be building apartments and I said it to be completely wrong. First needs and what you want to achieve. In the final report, there was still a list where apartments should be built and which the municipal housing company would build, but still it is wrong. (CEO municipal housing company, municipal process 3)

This absence of ideas and values is reinforced also by others, 'I think we have too little of such conversations within the municipality because one is afraid to have them' (head of social services department, municipal process 1). Since the process for developing housing provision programmes has been organized to primarily coordinate the different sectors different responsibilities, there appears to have been little space for discussing and negotiating ideas about what one wants in the municipalities (e.g. housing equity or growth), or what the different problems with housing provision constitute in the different municipalities beyond facilitating construction or accommodating statutory requirements for special needs housing. The knowledge that is organized sits within the measurable objectivist realm rather than situational and deliberative knowledge, including values. Such organization of knowledge constitutes an important dimension in depoliticizing the housing provision planning process.

In summary, the focus in the process is primarily on statistics and making prognosis, drawing from 'measurable, objectivist knowledge' that can be instrumentally applied in planning processes. The social service situated knowledge of managing the consequences of failing to provide adequate forms of housing is not recognized in the process. In addition, since the focus is on coordinating the municipal departments there appears to be little space to incorporate value-based knowledge, 'ideas', about what future city one wants (e.g. equality, growth) as a starting point for developing an integrated and comprehensive municipal policy for housing provision. Objectivist knowledge that constitutes an inherent feature of technocratic planning practices appears as a hegemonic point of departure in the cross-sectoral endeavour.

5. Conclusion – depoliticising municipal housing provision planning through principles of organizing

This article aims to make an empirical account of 'the political' in organizing cross-sectoral collaborative planning in Swedish municipalities, with the empirical example of processes concerning the development of municipal programmes for housing provision. Since urban planning is expected to coordinate and integrate a wide range of policies that concern space (Andersén 2020; Schmitt and Wiechmann 2018), we make the argument that it is imperative that 'the political' in organizing cross-sectoral planning activities is interrogated – as it remains unclear how and in what arenas deliberation and choice makings between conflicting alternatives and prioritisations take place. By drawing from Mouffe's notion of the political as 'choice making between conflicting alternatives', the choices made within processes of organizing – either representing settled hegemonic practices or agonistic deliberation between alternatives, posit politicians, actors and governmental sectors in different relations to each other, which operates to maintain or transform power relations, which in turn contribute to specific policy outcomes.

The analysis shows that the ways in which the planning organizes settings, problems and knowledge operate – in concert – 'to depoliticize' the planning process in the sense that inherent conflicts in decisions concerning housing provision are supressed by making the them appear apolitical and rational and having nothing to do with values and deliberation of conflicting alternatives. The planning organizes the problem of housing provision to foremost being a general development issue that can be managed through various forms of technocratic activities and enabling work (e.g. granting planning and building permissions, setting up calculation spread sheets). Although alternative problem representations that take housing needs of the socio-economic weak groups into consideration (e.g. people who do not have statutory special housing needs but low payment capacity) exist in the collaboration, they are neatly choreographed out in the process, by for example, not ranking high in spread sheets (e.g. by demonstrating that no penalties will be issued if failing to accommodate this housing need) or by organizing the social service as information providers or advocators rather than as project leaders. By primarily organizing settings and knowledge that render familiar to a technocratically governed urban planning, the social services struggle to get recognition in the process or fail to see how their working processes and situated knowledge can be incorporated in the housing provision planning – and are, as a consequence, marginalized in the process. Ironically, although marginalized in the housing provision planning on this strategic level, the social service unit appears to be organized as the main sector in the overarching municipal housing provision work of providing housing to its citizens. They will consequently have to make it work in acute housing situations when the local housing supply doesn't meet the local housing demands, and thus, finding housing in short notice and purchasing housing on the open market.

Even though the housing provision planning process follows democratic traditional decision-making procedures within the local government (e.g. the city mayor is adopting the housing provision policy), the local politicians appear, from the perspective of the civil servants, reluctant – and perhaps afraid – to make the housing provision planning an ideological matter and subject to conflict. On the one hand, they consensually agree upon – across the political parties – of the importance of housing to its residents, and, on the

other hand, they displace 'the political' and the ideological decisions to the realm of civil servants. The civil servants, in turn, pursue such decisions through technocratic means, rendering the decisions rational and legitimate whilst disguising the underpinning ideological positions and conflicts inherent to such decisions. When politicians appear to have abdicated from their responsibility of providing arenas for deliberating conflicting positions on housing, civil servants simply organize the planning in accordance with their logic and working tradition. By 'choosing' such forms of organizing, it contributes to, not only marginalize the social services and the welfare dimensions of housing provision that they are responsible for, it contributes to de-politicise the housing provision planning at large.

The analysis shows, furthermore, that the processes are organized primarily to coordinate the different sectors undertakings with regards to housing provision, and to a lesser degree integrate and 'de-silo' the municipal organization and develop an integrated housing provision policy. Instead, problems and responsibilities are divided up according to the silos of the municipal organization with the executive administrations as the overarching coordinating and responsible party. This can be understood as a result of a general lack of political will to work with the statutory housing provision issue – as it is easier to describe ongoing work in the different silos rather than develop new policies that may be conflict-ridden which in turn may be difficult to politically adopt. This may especially be the case in those instances when the successful adoption of a housing provision programme was connected to a monetary state subsidy – which no municipality would risk not obtaining due to political conflicts within the municipality.

Since the local politicians appears to abdicate from their housing provision responsibility as prescribed by the law, the housing provision problem is instead politicized at the national level through the launch of a new governmental investigation (Dir. 2020:53) which aims to 'create conditions for a social sustainable housing provision facilitating the situation for households with difficulties to demand housing on market terms, inter alia structural homeless people' (Dir. 2020:53, 1). The launch for such an investigation could be understood as a response to a failing belief in the municipality's capability of providing adequate housing through for example enabling and facilitating for the market alone, but could also be understood as a response to a failing belief in the housing provision act in itself (Lag 2000:1383).

Taken together, this study indicates that a hegemonic technocratic approach to organizing housing provision planning prevails – which point to the importance of thinking through the choices that are made within the organizing of such planning and the consequences they have on the housing situation for vulnerable groups and people with low income. What perhaps surprised us was that the different sizes of municipalities provided no difference with regard to the ways in the processes were organized, both the major, most urban, municipalities and the smallest, most rural, organized their processes in a very similar fashion, which suggest that there are taken for granted assumptions concerning how one should work with the housing provision question that perhaps characterizes the planning profession that is granted leadership. An important organizing dimension and which appears as though significantly lacking in all processes is the acknowledgement and deliberation of multiple forms of knowledge (e.g. value-based knowledge, situated knowledge, measurable knowledge). Municipalities at both the political and administrative level ought to think through the objectives of municipal housing provision planning,

establish spaces for deliberations of conflicting alternatives and decide what function it should have in the municipalities, specifically with regards to the perceived urgency of solving the housing provision problem in Sweden.

Note

1. For overview of the Swedish post-war housing policy see for example Hall and Vidén (2005), Movilla Vega (2017).

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