Fractured Space: Race, Power, and the Policy Narrative of Segregation in Stockholm, Sweden

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Acknowledgements & Preface

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I would also like to send my gratitude to the many respondents and interviewees in my fieldwork, who all took time out of their work to provide me with meaningful insights and share personal experiences.

And to my family and friends, for your inspiring, unwavering love and encouragement, my admiration and appreciation could not be deeper.

Before I begin, some brief context: During my semester as an intern at Nordregio (September – December 2014), I lived in a rented room in an apartment in Husby. My daily commute from this (stigmatized, mostly non-white, relatively poor) suburb to Kungsträdgården for work – one of Stockholm’s wealthiest, whitest, most elite areas – was a consistently jarring experience. It was here that I first came to understand just how dramatic Stockholm’s urban divisions were, and I felt a drive to uncover the processes behind them. This thesis is the result of my investigation.
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Abstract

Urban segregation and spatial expressions of inequality are increasingly pressing issues for European planners and public authorities. Within Stockholm, Sweden, these concerns have become inescapable, and the city’s social divisions and ‘immigrant issues’ have triggered fierce public debate throughout the country. Stockholm has, over the past few decades, become a showcase for a process of ‘splintering urbanism’ that has placed immense pressure on the city’s housing market and prompted a variety of political responses. Many suburbs built on the city’s edge in the 1960s and 70s (including Husby, Tensta, North Botkyrka, and Södertälje) have become islands of high unemployment, low social mobility, and stigmatization as the city centre has grown increasingly expensive and gentrified. In this paper, a qualitative case study on the relatively deprived, largely non-white neighbourhood of Alby is used to illustrate the discursive processes driving Stockholm’s racial segregation. By applying a critical discourse analysis to interview material with key planners from Alby, I articulate the link between structural racism, neoliberal housing policy, and Swedish planning norms to argue that segregation must be seen as a deeply political, historically rooted process. Drawing from post-structuralism and critical race theory, I contend that a needs-based policy approach within Stockholm’s housing and labour markets is critical for combating residential segregation and creating a more just urban environment.
“Ranked 1st again, Sweden’s ‘mainstreaming’ approach works to improve equal opportunities in practice. All residents are legally entitled to be free from discrimination, live with their family and secure in their residence and citizenship. Within Sweden’s social model, each individual is also legally entitled to support that addresses their specific needs (e.g. labour market introduction, orientation programmes, Swedish language and mother tongue courses).”
– Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), 2010

“The gaps are larger than elsewhere... across the educational distribution the large disparities in employment levels between immigrants and the native-born put Sweden among the worst performers in the OECD.”
- Farchy & Liebig (2014, 5)

**Chapter 1- Introduction**

Sweden is a remarkable patchwork of contradictions. The nation-state possesses a radiant idealism, representing, for many, “a vision of a ‘better’, more egalitarian political-economic model than... neoliberal capitalism” (Christophers 2013, 885). A recent MIPEX report, quoted above, describes Sweden as a world-leader in promoting equal rights and effective migrant integration policy. The country has also been considered “plausibly... Europe’s most successful economy” (The Economist, 2014), having avoided the worst effects of 2008’s global economic downturn. Stockholm, Sweden’s capital city of over one million inhabitants, is routinely ranked as one of the world’s most liveable, innovative, well-maintained cities (The Economist, 2012).

Despite these remarkable successes in indicators and rankings, there are deep, gnawing problems that threaten the core of Swedish exceptionalism. As the country has grown, economic inequality, unemployment, and residential segregation have trended dramatically upwards. Stockholm, by some measurements, is not merely a segregated city, but is rather **one of the most** ethnically segregated major cities in the Western world (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 2). When accounting for spatial divisions between native-born Swedes and those of a non-European background, Stockholm maintains a degree of segregation that is on par with New York City and Los Angeles (Östh et al 2015, 44). Labour market integration (that is, the percentage of foreigners who are able to acquire employment) is also shockingly poor. In 2011, Sweden contained the “highest disparity between native- and foreign-born adults with regards to being unemployed” among OECD states (Regeringskansliet 2011, quoted in Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 2). Farchy & Liebig (2014, 5) provide a more detailed overview of the situation, noting that the most significant disparity occurs “in the employment levels of low-qualified migrants and their native-born counterparts”. The precise variance is staggering: low-skilled, foreign-born adults have an employment rate that is 25% lower than native-born Swedes of similar educational attainment. Denmark, the second-
worst performing country in this regard, maintains a gap that is only 15%. Finland, by contrast, sees an employment rate for low-skilled migrants that is 4% higher than native-born Finns, while migrants fare best of all in the United States (Farchy & Lieberg 2014, 5). By these metrics, Sweden’s labour market integration is the worst of the OECD states by a large margin.

Sweden’s employment gap grows even wider when data controls for migrants from within the European Union. Even among those who have university qualifications, only 40% of non-EU migrants possess a qualified job compared to a figure of 90% for native-born Swedes (OECD 2006, 16). In fact, “the proportion of migrants who have attained a tertiary education is higher than [the proportion of] native Swedes”, indicating that foreign (and particularly non-EU) populations are deeply undervalued and underutilized within Sweden (Farchy & Liebig 2014, 6). These figures also highlight the fact that “insufficient skill” cannot come close to explaining discrepancies in labour market access for Sweden’s foreign-born population (OECD 2006, 16).

Comparative studies on this topic involving Sweden have supported this point. Bevelander & Pendakur (2012), comparing outcomes for non-labour immigrants (e.g., family-class and refugee) in Sweden and Canada, conclude that economic outcomes for migrants in Sweden are considerably worse, despite Sweden’s robust welfare state and high median wage. Bevelander & Pendakur (2005, 19) postulate that Sweden possesses “stickier” entry-level positions for migrants and low-skilled workers, meaning that upward mobility is comparatively lower. On top of this, inequality and relative poverty have been on the rise in Sweden. A recent project on mapping social exclusion in Europe noted that relative poverty had risen in tandem with economic inequality throughout Swedish cities, and especially in Stockholm (TIPSE Partnership, 2014).

There has been no shortage of theories put forth to explain these dramatic unemployment and income gaps between social groups in Sweden. Kahn (2012, 2), for example, cites labour market inflexibility as the key explanation, noting dramatically better outcomes for immigrants in the less “interventionist” markets of the USA and Canada. Hansen & Lofstrom (2003, 1) hypothesize that Sweden’s generous unemployment benefits could reduce incentives for migrants to work, although research on the subject is contradictory and lacking in clear conclusions (Barret & McCarthy 2008; Lorentzen et al 2012). Another, more provocative explanation for Sweden’s uneven labour market access is implicit structural racism. Sweden’s labour market is remarkably more favourable to white Swedes (and those with Swedish-sounding names) than it is to those of other racial groups, even when qualifications are equivalent. Research by Carlsson & Rooth (2006), Alden & Hammarstedt (2014), and Ahmed & Hammarstedt (2008) all show substantial evidence that applicants with Swedish-sounding names experience more favourable callback rates in both skilled and semi/unskilled occupations.

With all this in mind, it is not surprising that Stockholm’s most deprived peripheral suburbs, which are populated overwhelmingly by residents of a foreign background, experience achingly high unemployment and poor economic outcomes for residents of all skill levels. These neighbourhoods have become socioeconomic islands: stagnant, stigmatized, relatively poor, and offering few employment opportunities. The names of several suburbs (Rinkeby
and Husby in particular) have even become derogatory metonyms for the country’s foreign population within the Swedish lexicon; immigrants, for example, are often said to speak “Rinkeby Swedish” (Milani & Jonsson 2012, 44).

Segregation in Stockholm has thus become a major topic for researchers, politicians, media outlets, and policymakers alike. The nation faced a rapidly intensifying debate about the situation in May 2013, following widely publicized riots that began in suburban Stockholm and quickly spread to marginalized areas of other Swedish cities. Originally sparked by a police shooting of an unarmed man in Husby, the riots brought forth a broad spectrum of political reactions. Two days after the shooting, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt blamed the riots on “angry young men in need of overcoming cultural barriers”, while far-right nationalist-populist party The Sweden Democrats “demanded reinforced security measures against young hooligans” (Schierup et al 2014, 4). Still others saw the riots as a cry for help—a sign that Sweden’s public services and integration measures were failing the populations they were meant to serve (Schierup et al 2014, 4). In hindsight, it can be said that these riots precipitated Sweden’s current state of political polarization and the increasing popularity of far-right parties. Public debates on the subject mixed together varying conceptions of immigration, integration, segregation, refugee policy, poverty, and Swedish nationalism, painting rhetorical pictures of fringe ‘un-Swedish’ communities that needed to be tamed.

These are serious, highly contentious issues—and yet Sweden continues to be viewed as a global leader for integration, tolerance, and progressive multiculturalism. What is happening, and how has this come to be?

The answers are remarkably complex. Inevitably, I can only contribute what I believe are important pieces of the puzzle. In my view, there is a critical issue that has been underexplored in Swedish literature on the situation: the relationship between race and power in Swedish society, particularly as it relates to the spatial separation of communities within Stockholm’s metropolitan area. I contend that Stockholm’s dramatic segregation can be understood as an imprint of wider patterns of racial inequality in regards to political legitimacy, public policy norms, and access to economic capital. In this light, it can be seen that the supposed contradictions in Sweden’s mix of intense segregation and strong equality legislation are actually not so contradictory at all. It is, in many ways, the Swedish notion of equality that is problematic here, as sincere efforts to account for disadvantage and redistribute power are too often stifled by conflicting interests or legal precedents.

What follows in this paper is my analysis of this dimension of Stockholm’s segregation, informed by interview material and a case study on recent developments in the suburb of Alby. My key finding and core argument is that neoliberal planning policies in Stockholm have had unequal effects on different racial groups, driving gentrification and segregationist movement patterns. Moreover, I find that these effects are often ignored or obscured within Swedish public discourse, partly due to cultural and administrative precedents that place a vision of sterile ‘equality’ above empowerment. I have divided this paper into key sections to make my argument, approach, and empirical data as easy to follow as possible. What follows from here is my Literature Review, which contains my interpretation of the terms and concepts I explore in this paper, including a brief summary of relevant literature. My Theoretical Framework details my epistemological stance, and includes a critical analysis of
the theories I evoke throughout the later sections of this text. After this is a description of my Methodology, which includes information on my case study and a justification for the methods I have chosen to use in this thesis. The following case study on Alby contains the bulk of my empirical findings alongside an extended discourse analysis. The Discussion is a reflection on my arguments and the further implications of my case study, incorporating additional interview material. My Conclusion flows from this discussion and restates my key findings, providing some ideas for further research on the topic. My Policy Recommendations close this thesis, and are my attempt to offer some coherent practical responses to the problems I have explored.

My research questions, which guide my structure and argument throughout this text, are listed below:

*Table 1: Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Research Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do the challenges of Stockholm’s racial segregation manifest themselves in Alby?</td>
<td>My primary research question is addressed throughout this text, although a direct answer is offered at the end of my case study and expanded on within my Discussion and Conclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary Research Questions</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How can the relationship between racialization, segregation, power, and Swedish public policy be conceptualised?</td>
<td>My initial, most conceptual research question is addressed specifically within the Literature Review and Theoretical Framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What ideals have informed recent housing developments in Alby, and what types of ‘racialized effects’ have taken place?</td>
<td>This second question relates to my case study and analysis of housing privatization in Alby, where I explore the uneven effects of planning policy on racial minorities, utilizing a discourse analysis informed by critical race theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How can Swedish policy responses to segregation account for racial inequalities?</td>
<td>My response to this question is found within my Policy Recommendations, where I detail the ways in which affirmative action and multi-level governance strategies can be utilized to curtail racial segregation and promote social justice.</td>
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</tbody>
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Chapter 2- Literature Review: Race in the Context of Swedish Segregation

2.1- Defining Terms

Defining segregation is a complex, provocative task, not least because different disciplines “tend to rely on their own research paradigms” when discussing the issue (Vaughan & Arbaci 2011, 2). Other value-laden concepts, such as the ‘ghetto’ or the ‘enclave’, often intersect with discussions of segregation as well, adding layers of assumptions and political references that make it clear segregation is far from a neutral concept.

For this thesis, it is essential that I provide a definition of segregation that is nuanced, critical, and useful for understanding the present situation in Stockholm. At its most basic level, segregation refers to the separation of social groups in a multitude of situations, but understanding this phenomenon on the urban residential level requires a more detailed conceptualization. Pulling from a foundational text on racial segregation in the United States, Massey & Denton’s *American Apartheid* (1993, 1), I understand residential segregation as a historically rooted, deeply political process “maintained by ongoing institutional arrangements and contemporary individual actions”. Moreover, residential segregation reinforces these institutional arrangements in turn by “mediating, exacerbating, and ultimately amplifying... harmful social and economic processes” (Massey & Denton 1993, 7). This approach also aligns with Andersson & Molina’s more recent “racialization model” of segregation, which stresses the importance of “ideas, discourses, political measures and spatial praxis that are expressed in social geographical settlement patterns” (Andersson & Molina 2003, 261). It is from this perspective that I will analyse Stockholm’s segregation: not as a series of crude divisions, but as a sociopolitical process that spatially and discursively marginalizes particular populations. This is the definition of segregation I operationalize when critiquing planning discourse in Stockholm, as I intend to move away from conceptions of segregation as a primarily physical or local phenomenon.

Segregation is thus both a symptom and a driver of urban inequity, one node within a positive feedback loop of structural discrimination. This approach allows researchers to see, for example, how the spatial separation of communities links into issues such as housing policy, labour market integration, and structural racism. I should note that spatial segregation is not a ‘problem’ per se, and indeed if Stockholm had equal economic outcomes across its population, the city’s racial segregation might be seen as a curiosity instead of a pressing concern. This is, of course, not the case.

*Race* is another muddy, difficult concept to engage with, although I maintain that it is useful for understanding what is happening in Stockholm. June Thomas (2008) provides a succinct, yet effective, exploration and delineation of this concept. Race, while absurd in a biological context, is nonetheless a powerful and volatile social construction that has taken on different characteristics throughout history and around the globe. For example, US terms such as ‘Caucasian’ or ‘African-American’ do not quite translate into a European context, where modern racial categories are tightly wound with immigration and nationalism. In Sweden, *ethnicity* is often the preferred term when discussing populations of different national origins, although ethnicity depends largely on self-identification, and can include varying
conceptions of “tribal, national, regional, language grouping or other variations which may be less physically obvious than the popular conception of race” (Thomas 2008, 229). Race is also a more pronounced political category, a mark of difference that is often applied through social discourses and practices from a dominant group to a minority one (Price 2010, 165).

What is critical for this paper is that race refers to the social understanding of physical difference, and it is physical difference that is important to consider when looking at inequality and segregation within Stockholm. This is because, as I will show in the following sections, segregation in Stockholm falls largely along racial lines, and discrimination in different sectors is often predicated on the presence of ‘un-Swedish’ physical characteristics, not self-assigned ethnic origin.

This process of assigning racial categories to social groups is sometimes referred to as racialization. Within Sweden, this can best be understood as a division between ‘white Europeans’ (and particularly those of Nordic descent) and ‘others’, most notably residents with African and Middle-Eastern backgrounds. The precise degree to which one is marginalized in Swedish society is, in many ways, a function of physical appearance; the more Nordic one looks, the ‘closer’ they are to Swedish ethnonationalist conceptions of belonging (Lödén 2008, 257). The labour market in Stockholm is strongly segmented along these lines: African migrants have the worst outcomes of all social groups, with migrants from Asia faring only slightly better. In fact, Africans are the only group within Sweden whose employment rate (for both men and women) actually dropped between 2005 and 2012 (Alden & Hammarstedt 2014, 6).

Also critical to this thesis is my conception of planning, and how planning policy relates to socio-spatial power relations within Stockholm. In explaining this, I default to the answer given by Olsson (2009, 471), who contends that planning is:

“a special case of human action located in the taboo-ridden interface between individual and society, a magic performance of ontological transformations through which social meaning is turned into physical matter, use value into exchange value, signifier into signified. And vice versa”.

Planning, then, can be constituted by quite different sorts of things at different points in time. What I want to focus on, and what is critical for the overarching goals of this paper, is that planning (and public policy as a whole) involves “social meaning... turned into physical matter” (Olsson 2009, 471). Thus, planning in Sweden has been informed by very particular ideologies, social norms, and values. This much is uncontroversial, although the precise implications of these norms and values in Sweden are a bit more provocative- Swedish planning, for all its utilitarian might, has tended to benefit and promote the lifestyles of middle-class white Swedes to the exclusion of others. This is partly because planners in Sweden are required to serve in the deployment of political programs, only rarely playing an influential role in how public policies are drawn up (Blücher 2013, 53). Politics, capital, and national identity are the core factors that have shaped Swedish cities. The development of housing, welfare, and labour market policy in Sweden is more strongly linked to political and socioeconomic movements than it is to isolated planning trends.
2.2- A Critical View of Swedish Racial Discourse

“Eugenics should in any case not be considered a wholly concluded epoch in Swedish history... It found its place in the art of social engineering that designed the [Swedish] home.” (Andersson & Molina 2003, 265)

There is a long tradition in American sociology (particularly within studies of inequality and segregation) of positioning race as a key concept for analysis. The social values attached to skin colour and the various experiences of being White American, African-American, Native American, Latino, or part of another racial group have been central for researchers looking to understand identity and discrimination in the United States. Race, whether it is socially understood as a function of skin colour or another physical characteristic, retains a “powerful salience” and has consequences for the ways in which different individuals, communities, and governments address and understand each other (Duster 2000, xiii).

It is true that race (and racialization, as well as racial identity) is underexplored within many European countries when compared to the US. Sweden, in particular, is traditionally seen as a homogenous and ‘neutral’ country in international studies and rankings. In this sense, Sweden is sometimes discussed as being “post-racial” (Hübinette & Lundstrom 2011, 2), a state where race should be “[eschewed] as a central organizing principle of social action” (Cho 2009, 1589). In fact, Sweden’s 2008 Discrimination Act “deliberately removed the term ‘race’ from the list of unlawful discrimination grounds”, citing that the term (and its phenotypical connotations) had no place in Swedish legislation (Carlson 2012, 21).

In reality, Sweden, like much of Europe, has a dark history in terms of defining and dealing with racial difference both politically and culturally. Until 1976, for instance, the forced sterilization of Swedish residents was legally practiced (Miller 1997). Inspired by similar programs in the United States, Sweden’s eugenics program went on to be one of the longest-lasting in the Western world. Among those who were seen as ‘unfit’ to reproduce were the Sámi and Roma, longstanding (and now legally defined1) minority populations in Sweden who faced a “two-pronged” mixture of segregation and assimilation policies throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries (Omma et al 2011, 10). The Roma, in particular, were “defined [by the Swedish government] as a deviant and lower class race entirely separate from the pure Swedish race” (Martinsson 2013, 2). A particularly chilling article from Hofsten (1938, 259) documents the patterns and legal status of sterilization in early 20th-century Sweden, noting that the procedure was carried out for reasons “both eugenic and social”. It was not until 2000 that the Swedish government made a formal recognition of this policy and apologized to its victims. It is estimated that approximately 63,000 women and men in Sweden were forcibly sterilized while eugenics laws were in place (Hyatt 1997, 478).

It is extremely unusual to see Sweden discussed in the context of European colonial history and slavery. Sweden, however, did take part in the same colonization process that other

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1 Sweden’s 2010 Act on National Minorities and National Minority Languages, enacted in line with the standards of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, extends special protection to Sweden’s Sámi, Roma, Jewish, Tornedalen, and Swedish-Finnish populations (Zimmerman 2010).
European powers did, although it was less obvious than the imperial ambitions of France or Great Britain. Sweden held a Caribbean island colony in Saint Barthélemy, in which slavery was legally practiced until 1847 (Mångkultuellt Centrum 2014). The north of Sweden (particularly in the Sámi areas of Lappland) was also settled via a process of “structural colonialism”, as state-sanctioned outposts sprang up in the region during the 19th century (Green 2009, 186). The indigenous Sámi have remained as “Others in relation to [Swedish] national identity”, and are still subject to pervasive discrimination in many areas of Swedish society (Ojala 2009, 4).

Until 1958, Sweden’s prestigious Uppsala University was home to a state institute for ‘Racial Biology’, which still houses a macabre collection of Sámi bones and assorted remains. Sámi corpses were brought in from prisons and plundered from graves, where they were measured and experimented on to determine differences between the Sámi and Swedish ‘races’ (Savage 2010). Similar projects took place at the Karolinska Institute, where Anders Retzius “developed an influential system for classifying the races according to their cranial shape, which remained in use long after it was introduced in the 1840s” (Ahren 2009, 61). Sweden’s history is rife with “racist ideas, attitudes, and practices” that have connected with both scientific and nationalist movements throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (Ojala 2009, 27). Sweden, contrary to its popular image in the Western imagination, has been a historical centre for scientific racism and the “construction of the white race”, one that influenced extreme ‘genetic purity’ movements in Nazi Germany and the United States (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 8).

Sweden’s government made a conscious effort to move away from racialized discourse in the decades following WWII, partaking in what Hübinette & Lundström term the “construction of ‘good Sweden’”. This process involved a shift from “racialized and homogenised nation-building” to governing norms that stressed Sweden’s position as “the most tolerant and progressive of all white nations” (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 7). In the latter half of the 20th century, the establishment of a nationalized welfare regime required the “strong adherence to a wilful colour-blindness”, one that glossed over racialized experiences and disadvantages in pursuit of a logic that treated everyone ‘the same’ (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 9). The celebrated Swedish welfare state was predicated partly on conformist values that overlapped with Swedish traditions of assimilating ethnic and racial difference.

Swedish history cannot be separated from Europe’s painful past of colonization, sterilization, slavery, and scientific racism. Moreover, Sweden and the United States have a close link with their “shared history of shame” in regards to forced sterilizations and movements promoting white purity (Hyatt 1997, 476). Recognizing these past wrongs is critical for understanding Sweden’s present inequalities in regards to socially constructed racial difference. A national narrative that treats racism as a relic of the past is a poor substitution for taking racialized discourse seriously. Race was, and remains, a concept that invokes the “need to purify the social body [and] preserve its identity”, unmistakably bound with modern Swedish nationalism and identity politics (Torfing 1999, 203). Ethnographic and discourse-analysis studies written by racial minorities in Sweden have often stressed this point. Sawyer (2000), in an eye-opening exploration of modern black identity in Sweden, argues that while “[official] classifications obscure race as a category”, “race is recognized, used, and fiercely
debated” within everyday Swedish practices. Wigerfelt et al (2013, 1), along similar lines, contend that “racial categorisations are still important for explaining people’s life possibilities and [vulnerabilities]” within Sweden.

In 2014, an extensive report on Swedish ‘Afrophobia’ was conducted by the Mångkulterellt Centrum, which explored patterns of racialized hate crimes within the country. The report concluded that “Afro-Swedes are the Swedish minority most exposed to hate crimes” and noted that “Afrophobic hate crimes have... increased by 24% since 2008” (Mångkulturell Centrum 2014). The report, which was commissioned by the Ministry of Employment, had a strong impact, even prompting current Prime Minister Stefan Löfven to condemn Afrophobia in an official policy statement. A UN Working Group on Human Rights also praised the candid nature of the report, noting “a heightened xenophobic and racist attitude towards migrants” within Sweden that needed to be reckoned with (UNHR News 2014). In my view, the most significant conclusion of the report can be found in its executive summary:

“The Swedish attitude to race, which says that race is non-existing in Sweden, is an obstacle for constructive discussions about the effects of racial discrimination, and an obstacle for Afro-Swedes when coming to terms with experiences of everyday racism.”
(Mångkulturell Centrum 2014)

2.3- Racial Segregation in the Context of Swedish Policy

Although race has received relatively little attention in comparison to ethnicity or nationality within discussions of segregation in Sweden, there are still a number of academics within the country who have reflected specifically on the topic. These include, most notably, Tobias Hübinette, Catrin Lundström, John Östh, Roger Andersson, Åsa Bråmå, and Irene Molina. All of them will be referenced here, and I hope to build upon their work to provide a slightly different perspective on the issue, one more informed by American policy measures and a deeper exploration of racial disadvantage with Stockholm’s urban space.
Figure 1: A map from John Östh (2013), using a k-nearest neighbour index to map concentrations of visible minorities within the Stockholm region. Stockholm’s population is represented through artificial ‘cells’ and coloured on a gradient. Green correlates with high concentrations of visible minorities, while dark red correlates with high concentrations of white residents. North Botkyrka, which I will focus on later in this text, is circled in the bottom-left corner.

Although Sweden does not keep official statistics on racial identity, Östh et al (2015, 35) approximate US-style racial categories within Stockholm by mapping “visible minorities”, which they define as populations “having [an] origin in a non-European, non-Anglo-Saxon country”. Their results (see Figures 1 and 2) show that Stockholm is deeply racially segregated, roughly on par with the spatial divisions found in Los Angeles. The authors contend that “the visible minority group in a Swedish context is a racial category comparable with Blacks, Hispanics, or Asians in the LA context” (Östh 2015, 46). The distinction between their conception of racialized visible minorities and the ethnic minorities tallied in Swedish data is an important one. Within Swedish data, I would be included as an ‘ethnic minority’ due to my foreign background as an American², despite the fact that I am white, blue-eyed, and possess a Swedish-sounding name. In my view, this is inappropriate, as this kind of generalized ‘ethnic’ data obscures the most intense trends of segregation, discrimination, and disadvantage.

² The Swedish category of ‘foreign background’ includes those born in another country and those born in Sweden to two foreign parents (Statistics Sweden, 2015)
Figure 2: A graph from Östh et al (2015) comparing spatial isolation between racial groups in Los Angeles and visible minorities (VM) in Swedish cities. Most strikingly, visible minorities in Stockholm maintain a degree of residential segregation approximately on par with Blacks in LA.

Tobias Hübinette and Catrin Lundström, applying critical race theory within a Swedish context, have written at length about the structure of ‘hegemonic whiteness’ in Sweden. They trace the development of ‘white melancholia’ within Swedish cultural discourse, arguing that the “idealisation of a homogenous past” has taken powerful political roots (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 11). Troublingly, they reflect on the fact that Sweden’s antiracist movement remains “dominated by white Swedes”, “locating [racism]... outside of normative Swedishness” (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 11). The danger of this trend is that non-white populations are excluded from discourses on their own identity and sense of belonging, creating a situation where marginalized groups are treated as political and moral objects.

The ideals behind the development of Swedish planning (and the construction of Sweden as a nation) clearly play into these racialized discourses. The concept of the folkhemmet, alternatively referred to as the ‘Swedish model’, functioned as the ideological frame for the

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3 In English, ‘people’s home’
development of Sweden’s famous welfare, employment, and housing policies throughout the 20th century (Rojas 2005, 4). This Social Democratic project was imagined as a sort of ‘Third Way’ between communism and liberal capitalism; the *folkhemmet* sought to provide universal housing, robust social services, and foster a sense of national solidarity. Despite rapid economic growth during these developments, Sweden remained guided by an “ethno-nationalist [and] productivist stance”, reinforced by aforementioned sterilization and assimilation policies (Spektorowski & Ireni-Saban 2011, 169). Irene Molina (1997, ii), exploring these developments from a post-colonial perspective, also notes a “historical continuity in... social constructions of the Other” that racialized particular populations and spaces during the *folkhemmet* era. The construction of the ‘people’s home’, in other words, required the construction of a *people* who were perceived to share core physical and cultural characteristics.

Racialization is certainly not unique to Sweden, nor is it new within Swedish history; however, because large non-white populations are relatively new to Swedish society, there is a lack of awareness about the challenges that these groups face. Too often, discussions of disadvantage are twisted into ‘immigration issues’, with an assumption that poor integration is normal and that time will alleviate the worst inequalities within Stockholm (Legeby 2011, 275). Even more problematic, there is the “essentialization of culture” present in these discussions, as inequalities and divisions between social groups are too often dismissed as reflections of vague ‘cultural differences’, shifting the burden of responsibility away from the state and on to the (often quite powerless) community or individual (Ngeh 2007, 440).

Andersson (2013, 182), in his assessment of this discourse, notes a “neglect in Europe to fully grasp the dynamics of segregation in the wake of increasing social polarization in the context of more multicultural urban settings”. This has created a situation where, in Sweden particularly, racial segregation is seen by planners as a process of self-selection— that is, that immigrants and racial minorities tend to cluster together due to their own preferences (Härmsman 2006, 1345; Schönwälder 2007, 74; Bolt 2009, 402). It is remarkably difficult to determine these trends in practice, particularly since Stockholm’s low housing availability constrains the choices available to both refugees and labour migrants. Still, evidence for self-segregation in Sweden is fairly thin (Andersson 2013, 169). Although writing about Uppsala instead of Stockholm, Molina (1997, ii) uses a phenomenological survey to argue that a focus on self-segregation is inaccurate and “culturally deterministic”. She finds “no empirical support for... the common belief that spatial patterns of ethnic segregation could have been generated by immigrants when choosing their allocations in the city” (Molina 1997, ii).

It is worth noting that, relative to other European countries, refugees make up a large proportion of the immigration that Sweden receives (UNHCR 2015). As of 2014, Sweden’s total refugee population was 114,175, a significant number for a European country of 9 million (World Bank, 2015). The main countries of origin for current asylum-seekers in Sweden are Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Syria. This large refugee population does constitute an influx of relatively low-skilled, heavily marginalized migrants, although their remarkably poor results across the Swedish labour market cannot be explained by this fact alone. Sweden has taken a compassionate, laudable approach to refugee acceptance, but disappointing results from Sweden’s integration policies are indicative of powerful structural inequities. At present, refugees coming to Sweden are allowed to settle wherever they desire, as long as
there is housing available (Migrationsverket 2015). This is a change in policy from 2010, when asylum-seekers were placed by municipalities with the aim of achieving an even distribution of refugees around the country (Fredlund-Blomst 2014).

In theory, this is an egalitarian system that allows refugees to choose their residence within Sweden. In practice, the results leave much to be desired. Dramatic housing shortages in Sweden’s major cities (as well as a dearth of public rental apartments) mean that refugees are often ‘choosing’ between one deprived area and the next (Rehnvall, fieldnotes 1/4/2015). Understandably, some migrants desire to be close to friends and family in Stockholm’s suburbs, but the factors that initially pushed these populations to the city’s outskirts remain out of their control.

I touched earlier on the risk of the ‘essentialization’ of culture, and it is critical to understand the debate on self-segregation with this in mind. It is common in Swedish media to see Stockholm’s suburbs depicted as points of cultural divide, where immigrants congregate because they can communicate with more residents of a similar cultural background and therefore feel more comfortable (Rodenstedt 2014, 13). Stockholm’s suburbs are actually remarkably diverse and rich in their demographic variety; newly-arrived migrants and longer-term residents from different regions of Africa, the Middle East, East Asia, and South America all live in close proximity to one another (Åslund et al 2010, 395). In Alby, for instance, there is “no dominant ethnic group”, and a high turnover of residents ensures that the demographic makeup of the area is difficult to generalize (Dymén & Reardon 2014, 26). The most distinguishing characteristic, as shown by John Östh’s data, is that these residents are not white, and that fact places them as ethnic and cultural aliens within Swedish discourse4. These suburbs are not analogous to, for example, New York City’s ‘Chinatowns’, where ethnic enclaves have become popularized as positive facets of the American urban experience.

Self-segregation, then, certainly exists to some degree, but it cross-cuts with many restrictions and cannot fully explain differences in segregation patterns between Sweden and its European or North American peers. Until recently, the role of white Swedes in contributing to segregation via movement patterns was generally ignored in national research. On this topic, Hübinette (fieldnotes 5/2/2015) and Andersson (2013) contend that the lifestyles and residential choices of white Swedes play a significant role in perpetuating and intensifying racial segregation in Stockholm. Andersson (2013, 183) notes a “pronounced ethnic and social class sensitivity in... migration flows” around Stockholm, indicating that US-style white avoidance has been a significant trend keeping Swedish suburbs deeply racially divided. ‘White avoidance’ refers to a phenomenon where white residents of a city will tend to avoid (both in terms of housing choice and daily commuting) areas where non-white residents live and work. This implicates many white Swedes as complicit in their own kind of ‘self-segregation’, passively creating spaces of privilege and racial homogeneity.

One reason why reports on segregation have tended to neglect the movement patterns of white Swedes is that segregation is often interpreted as a localized problem. As Öresjö et al

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4 When I lived in Husby, I frequently heard white Swedes remark that it was like “going to another country” to travel up to my subway station in the north (fieldnotes 17/4/2015). A casual comment, but one that admits the profound separation between an imagined ‘real Sweden’ and a somewhat hazier ‘other Sweden’ where outsiders come to live.
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(2005, 3) argue, Stockholm’s poor suburbs “are thought to have concentrations [of minorities] because there is something wrong with [the suburbs]”. This constitutes a circular, self-fulfilling understanding of segregation, as neighbourhoods with minorities are seen as inherently problematic or undesirable. Policies are thus targeted at particular areas and ‘problem’ populations, instead of understanding segregation as a phenomenon that involves wealthy white Swedes as well. This focus on specific localities overlaps with Swedish processes of racialization, as non-white immigrants become spatially concentrated “targets of institutionalized practices of exclusion” (Ngeh 2007, 433).

The effect of this racialization is that the stigma and disadvantage of being an ‘immigrant’ in Sweden does not leave after the naturalization process, or even after successive generations are born and ‘integration’ procedures have been followed. Aforementioned discrepancies in economic achievement and labour market participation persist among non-white groups, whether they are born in Sweden or not (Nordin & Rooth 2009, 503). Social categories do not dissolve so easily. What gives far-right groups like the Sweden Democrats their power is the way that anxiety over non-European otherness is harnessed and recast into a narrative that places “being white [as] the central core and the master signifier of Swedishness, and thus of being Swedish” (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 4).

Not content with merely exploring segregation and unemployment, Malmberg et al (2013) look for a more provocative correlation: segregation and car burnings (used as a rough indicator of social unrest). Unsurprisingly, they find that car burnings and racial segregation (i.e., concentrations of minorities) correlate quite strongly, as do car burnings and households that receive social welfare, attesting to the significance of economic deprivation (Malmberg et al 2013, 1044). More strikingly, they find no significant correlation between car burnings and foreign-born populations— the large majority of those involved in urban unrest are young and Swedish-born. This implies that economic and social marginalization, rather than place of birth or nationality, are the most pressing factors behind social unrest. It is the “processes that segregate immigrants into specific neighborhoods”, rather than immigration per se, that contribute most strongly to urban unrest (Malmberg et al 2013, 1044). This provides additional support for the idea that marginalization cuts across multiple generations and cannot be simplified to either an ‘immigrant’ or ‘cultural’ problem. Segregation, economic inequality, stigmatization, and racial disadvantage overlap in significant ways.

It does not help that Swedish organized labour is notoriously insular. Cerna (2014, 77) notes that the key unions in Sweden5 presented “a united block” against labour immigration liberalization until the mid-2000s, against the wishes of many employers. Before this, Swedish unions tended to support a high intake of refugees in lieu of labour migration, as refugees were seen to present little threat to jobs for ‘native Swedish’ workers (Dymén & Reardon 2014). Even now, non-white migrants enjoy little representation in these circles. As obtaining a mid- or high-level job in Sweden is often dependent on contacts and recommendations, this is a crippling problem for those who lack a social network within Stockholm. Schierup & Ålund (2011, 48), reflecting on these attitudes, describe Sweden’s

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5 These include the Landsorganisationen (for low-skilled labour), Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation (mid-tier), and Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation (high-skilled)
labour market as “ever more exclusivist” and “neither effective nor... sufficient” at preventing racial discrimination and promoting equal job access for minorities.

On top of these disadvantages, refugees from outside of Europe with high-level qualifications and work experience as physicians, dentists, and academics are required to go through a program of up to six years to be ‘authorised’ to work in Sweden. This is only the period of training required to apply for these high-level positions, not a fast-track to employment. Even those who pass through these bureaucratic barriers are often “sub-ordinate” and forced to work in a lower position than they could have achieved in their home country (Andersson & Gao 2009, 444). There is remarkable scepticism towards those with qualifications from outside of Europe and North America, although “even with a Swedish education, a foreign-born citizen is much less likely to have a qualified job” than a native Swede (Andersson & Gao 2009, 435). There is tremendous untapped potential within Sweden’s working-age population, and the country’s non-European communities experience the greatest degree of labour marginalization, often finding their skills wasted in Sweden’s parochial job market.

2.4- The State of Swedish Housing

Swedish housing policy is notoriously complex, and it is not relevant for me to dive into all of its intricacies. What is important for this text is that low-income, marginalized areas of Stockholm are dominated by public (municipally owned) rental apartments. Other types of dwellings (including the unique ‘tenant-owned’ form6) are not municipally owned and function as private forms of housing (Christophers 2013, 890). Needs-tested social housing of the kind found in the UK and (to a lesser extent) in the USA does not exist in Sweden. This design is intentional- Sweden has sought to create an ‘integrated’ housing market that facilitates equal access to both public and private dwellings. Most low-income families and individuals rent from the municipality, where they are able to receive more controlled rent prices than on the private market, and where income support from the municipality is easier to access.

Swedish housing has undergone some dramatic changes since the early 1990s, when an economic crisis prompted an end to generous state subsidies for municipal housing development. Hedin et al (2012, 445) trace these developments, noting that Sweden’s housing stock went from being a significant net burden of 30 billion SEK a year in the late 1980s to “providing a net income of roughly 31 billion kronor ten years later”. This process coincided with a gradual movement towards liberalisation and decentralization, which was solidified in 2011, when rent prices on the public and private rental markets were unlinked from each other (Christophers 2013, 891). Even within the private rental market, a form of ‘soft’ corporatist rent control is still practiced, but these prices now trend higher than those within the public rental sector (Stockholms stad 2013, 1; Borg, fieldnotes 11/2/2015). The pressures for these changes came from a variety of sources – a right-leaning government, concerns regarding national debt, housing shortages, EU competition laws, and private interest groups – but this adoption of neoliberal norms within Swedish policy is striking.

6 In Swedish, the bostadsrättförening form- tenants ‘buy’ a share within a cooperatively-owned apartment block, and in turn receive the right to use the dwelling (Christophers 2013, 889).
The mechanisms behind these changes are complex due to the strong role of tenants’ unions and corporatist ideals in Sweden, but they show a very clear trend. The Swedish ‘universalist’ housing model no longer exists, and Stockholm is instead increasingly dominated by private forms of housing (particularly tenant-owned). Public rental apartments, formerly a cornerstone of Sweden’s cities, are dwindling in number. Stockholm is an extreme case, as public rentals now only make up between 7-10% of the total market (Borg, fieldnotes 11/2/2015). This shrinkage of the rental sector, particularly within Stockholm’s centre, has been an “important [part] of the gentrification process”, cultivating an inner-city population that is overwhelmingly wealthy and white (Andersson & Turner 2014, 26). However, public rentals remain dominant in Sweden’s poor, peripheral suburbs (Öresjö et al 2005, 4). In Rinkeby, for instance, 99.7% of residents rent from the municipality (Rinkeby-Kista District, 2015). Similarly, in Fittja, Botkyrka’s poorest neighbourhood, 86% of residents live in public rental apartments (Botkyrka kommun, 2013). Stockholm’s housing market is deeply segregated and socially stratified, and public rentals correlate strongly with low-income, highly stigmatized areas (Andersen et al 2013, 183; see also Figures 1, 3, and 5). This context is important for understanding the troubling situation that Alby (detailed in Chapter 5) is facing. Housing in Sweden is deeply politicized, and Stockholm in particular is facing a severe housing shortage which amplifies its socioeconomic divisions.

Figure 3: A graph from Andersson et al (2010, 26) showing the distribution of income deciles in different types of housing tenures throughout Sweden. Those included in the 1st decile on the x-axis are Sweden’s poorest, while those in the 10th decile are the state’s wealthiest. This figure groups public and private rentals together, but the trend is, overwhelmingly, that low-income groups reside in rental housing.
Figure 4: A map of the Stockholm region measuring diversity (i.e., concentrations of residents with a foreign background). Red correlates with low diversity, while green correlates with high levels of diversity. Note the significant overlapping of diversity with visible minorities (Figure 1) and relative poverty (Figure 7, in Chapter 5). Source: Reardon & Dymén (2014, 16), Nordregio.
The links between racialization, segregation, power, and Swedish public policy discourse are complex and significant. Racialized residents experience the highest levels of segregation in both the housing and labour markets, and this segregation is legitimized partially by constructions of white Swedishness that have remained potent throughout the nation-state’s history. The experiences and institutionalized disadvantages that racial minorities in Stockholm face should not be brushed away through cultural reductionism. Swedish policy has had poor results regarding the socioeconomic outcomes of non-white residents, and this necessitates a critical discussion of how these policies are commonly interpreted and practiced.
Chapter 3- Theoretical Framework

My work takes place within a post-structuralist framework. As Rhode (1990, 620) explains, “post-structuralism... refers to theories of interpretation that view meaning as a cultural construction mediated by arrangements of language or symbolic form”. Post-structuralism, often utilized within sociology and anthropology, is sometimes described as “antifoundational” in the sense that it treats “matters [as]... intelligible and debatable only within the precincts of the contexts or situations or paradigms or communities that give them their local and changeable shape” (Fish 1989, 344). This distinguishes post-structuralism from earlier structuralism (exemplified by the influential writings of Saussure and Levi-Strauss), which sought to find common structures that motivated human behaviour, language, and social organization regardless of context.

This is the core of my ontological and epistemological stances- that “reality is socially constructed” and that knowledge cannot be situated “independent of our own volition” (Berger & Luckmann 1966, 13). As Tompkins (1988, 735) attests, values, words, and concepts are still “real” and consequential, but they possess no intrinsic meaning outside of their contingent, continually reshaped webs of social usage. Post-structuralism thus constitutes a rejection of positivism within the social sciences, and stresses the interpretive, subjective nature of human interaction. The substance of this text, and the concepts I choose to engage with, are inevitably imbued with personal experience and value. Post-structuralism is not something I ‘apply’; it is a vantage point, an understanding of the world that forces me to interpret social phenomena in particular ways.

Post-structuralism, particularly as it relates to social interpretations of power, has its roots in the political writings of Michele Foucault. The power we can see seeping through Swedish planning discourse involves the “human subject... placed in relations of production and signification” who in turn reproduces racialized hierarchies via historically embedded practices (Foucault 1982, 778). As Dreyfus & Rabinow (1983, 185) describe:

“[For Foucault], power is not a commodity, a position, a prize, or a plot; it is the operation of the political technologies throughout the social body. The functioning of these political rituals of power is exactly what sets up the nonegalitarian, asymmetrical relations.”

Flyvbjerg & Richardson (2002, 45), drawing from Foucault’s work, reflect on the “ambivalence [towards] power” within European planning theory and note that “Habermasian communicative rationality” has become dominant within the field. More specifically:

“Habermas’s utopian world is oriented towards an ideal speech situation where validity claims are based on consensus amongst equal participants, and the negative, distorting effects of power are removed.” (Flyvbjerg & Richardson 2002, 45)

Planning theory within Europe, and certainly within Sweden, has been guided by this utilitarian, consensus-seeking logic where “power games are masked as technical rationality” (Flyvbjerg & Richardson 2002, 48; Wänström 2013, 157). Turning back to Foucault (1982), I understand that power is hegemonic and inescapable within planning, encapsulated within
norms and assumptions that can be difficult to dissect. Planning, as Olsson (2009) illustrates, is inevitably intertwined with social meanings and performances of power, and there is always an imagined subject or ideal being served to the exclusion of another. Communicative rationality in planning plays out as a contradiction, as “coercion [itself] would be needed to arrive at Habermas’s non-coercive communication” (Flyvbjerg & Richardson 2002, 58). To reveal this (often embedded and invisible) coercion requires an understanding of structure and discourse to link planning practice with political ritual.

Foucault takes this conception of power further: he contends that theorists should “criticise the inner workings of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent” while striving to “unmask... political violence”. Indeed, this is my position, and I aim to ‘unmask’ the asymmetrical and potentially destructive implications of Stockholm’s planning trends. To operationalize this perspective, I draw on John Forester’s (1993, 5) assertion that planners can “assess practice not simply as the achievement of goals, but... as the practical, communicative organizing of others’ attention to relevant and significant issues at hand”. To do this requires a methodology and mode of interpretation that is able to reveal how segregation within Stockholm is conceptualized by planners and responded to via policy trends. Using Alby as a case study allows me to see the structural implications of local housing privatization, and a critical discourse analysis permits me to assess the broader racialized assumptions and effects of privatization as a practice. Put differently, I desire to reveal who is served politically and economically by Alby’s recent developments, critiquing common understandings of the areas and populations that constitute ‘issues’ to address.

Foucault’s understanding of power also illuminates the distinction between individual instances of racism and structural racism as an embedded set of relationships and operations. This is where critical race theory (CRT) can be injected- CRT treats race as a significant social construct and “[emphasizes] the racialized aspects of advantage” often upheld by legal and political systems (Price 2010, 150). Moreover, CRT holds that “color-blind, or ‘formal’, conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board” are inadequate, and potentially even destructive, as a response to structural racism (Delgado & Stefancic 2001, iv). CRT can thus be read as a deep critique of ‘post-racialism’, which is an ideology that calls for a “retreat from race” and claims a “moral equivalence” between (for example) racial profiling and race-based affirmative action (Cho 2009, 1603). Post-racialism is ingrained within Swedish legal discourse, where even a recognition of racialized advantage is often interpreted as a threat to egalitarianism and equality (as evidenced by the state’s 2008 Discrimination Act).

By drawing from CRT within my work, I am explicitly rejecting post-racialism and its closely related concept of ‘colour-blindness’ as appropriate ways of theorizing socioeconomic disadvantage. There is no neutral ‘outside’ position on racial discourse, and post-racialism in itself constitutes a “new racial hegemony” that denies power and discursive legitimacy to non-white minorities (Cho 2009, 1589). Racism is not exotic, not something only evident in the ‘extreme’ societies of apartheid South Africa or Civil War-era USA; racism is normalized, banal, and paradoxically reinforced through its denial (Price 2010, 153). This positioning is important- critical race theory itself emerged as a reaction to post-racialism in the United States, and CRT has since been used as a tool to “[question] the very foundations of liberal
order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law” (Delgado & Stefancic 2001, iv). In this case, I use CRT as a means to question the Swedish notion of ‘equality’ upheld by the state’s legal systems and planning norms. As I will show in my case study of Alby and the following discussion, equality can be a disingenuous ideal, particularly in the context of structural racism, where it can serve to mask discriminatory practices and assumptions.

In the context of my methodology and analysis, post-structuralism is critical. Concepts such as race, equality, and integration are not normative, empirical realities; rather, they are political and linguistic constructions that must be understood as historically and discursively rooted. Critical race theory, for instance, “relies on post-structural epistemology”, as it provides a means to “deconstruct” and assess racial categories (Chang 1993, 1322). No racial discourse can “take place within a vacuum”, and race must be seen as something historically, socially, and discursively embedded (Chang 1993, 1268). To be clear, my ‘deconstruction’ of concepts like race or equality does not exactly ‘break them down’ or deny them power; my goal is instead to visit and interpret these terms as fluid and socially constructed within a Swedish context. By applying CRT within my discourse analysis of planning in Alby, my goal is to reveal how the “everyday claims of planners can have political effects upon community members [by] empowering or disempowering them” (Forester 1993, 4). In this case, I will show how ‘white Swedish’ norms, alongside the absorption of neoliberal ideals, have created the “political technologies” that entrench and justify Stockholm’s urban inequity (Dreyfus 1983, 185).

Within this post-structuralist frame, my analytical approach to urban segregation is strongly informed by the work of two French-American sociologists, Philippe Bourgois and Loïc Wacquant. They each understand race, power, and market liberalization to be intimately related. More precisely, social, political, and economic operations pull capital and legal legitimacy away from non-white groups, while neoliberal norms facilitate a discourse that treats inequality and poverty as individual (rather than structural) problems. The issue is thus depoliticized, and economic and spatial gaps edge wider and wider between racial groups. Economic practice, racial biases, and inner-city stigmatization thus reinforce each other in a remarkably destructive cycle. At its worst, we see the 1980s New York slums of the Bronx and Harlem, together with south Chicago and south-central Los Angeles, become sites of intense urban decay, violence, and hopelessness. While their work is based predominantly on large American cities, there are alarming (and growing) similarities with racial segregation processes in Sweden and other European states. Wacquant himself noted this in 2004, arguing that “the racialization, penalization, and depoliticization of the urban turbulences associated with advanced marginality reinforce one another in Western Europe as in the United States” (Wacquant 2004, 1).

Wacquant’s conception of neoliberalism, an intrinsically slippery term, is also central to how I assess privatization trends in Alby. Wacquant (2006, 3) characterizes neoliberalism as “[an] ideological project and governmental practice mandating submission to the ‘free market’ and the celebration of ‘individual responsibility’”, often coinciding with the retrenchment of state institutions and public organizations. This is the same definition that other Swedish authors (such as Roger Andersson and Brett Christophers) have also drawn on in their writing. In
Alby’s case, I use neoliberalism as a way of conceptualizing and clarifying the ideals behind housing privatization. Moreover, I assess neoliberalism as a tool which makes segregationist practices in Stockholm politically discrete, serving as a way of discursively reframing and legitimizing urban injustice.

In his landmark ethnography *In Search of Respect*, Bourgois rallies against the “historically entrenched racialized logic [which] legitimizes confining... violence spatially to inner cities where generations of vulnerable youths lead lives of poverty, underemployment, long-term incarceration, or premature death” (Bourgois 2003, 192). Bourgois’ conclusions come from experiences in more extreme settings, as he explores the disturbing patterns of violence and urban decay in 1980s New York City. It is fortunate that Stockholm, despite its divisions, remains a very safe city. However, I contend that there is a similarly ‘racialized logic’ that confines and stigmatizes many residents of Stockholm spatially, politically, and economically. It is a unique understanding of white Swedishness, cloaked in layers of agreeable rhetoric and misguided equality policy, which has played a key role in creating Stockholm’s remarkable urban divisions.

Swedish applications of post-structuralist critical race theory, including those offered by Irene Molina and Tobias Hübinette, are also central to my exploration of disadvantage in Alby. Molina (1997, ii) set a unique precedent in Swedish geography by exploring “urban racialization” in Uppsala, and Hübinette, already referenced at length earlier in this text, has been one of Sweden’s most visible and outspoken scholars on racism and racial identity. Race is by no means a uniquely American construction, and critical race theory has proven useful for understanding and conceptualizing socioeconomic disadvantage within Sweden.

Moreover, I concur with Östh (2015, 46) that it is “reasonable and theoretically of interest” to draw comparisons with racial segregation processes in metropolitan Sweden and the USA. My study is not explicitly comparative, although I do draw on American literature to aid in my analysis of Stockholm’s segregation. I analyse segregation as a primarily political process, albeit one with spatially visible symptoms and effects. From this perspective, Stockholm’s segregation (and the planning challenges therein) can be interpreted as the tangible result of *discursively constructed* norms and values that have racialized and stigmatized particular urban spaces. This approach allows me to address my research questions in a way that is precise and coherent, as I can link Swedish discourses of racialized power together with housing development in Alby, revealing the ‘racialized effects’ of privatization and structural discrimination.

My theoretical framework is rooted in post-structuralism, drawing specifically from critical race theory as a way to understand and emphasize the importance of racial difference as a marker of socioeconomic disadvantage. By utilizing a critical discourse analysis within a case study, I can examine the ways in which Stockholm’s planning practices reinforce discriminatory trends and serve white, middle-class subjects. As a way of conceptualizing the drivers of urban inequity, I draw from American sociological studies on segregation, which detail the role of neoliberalism in reproducing racial divisions. This mixture allows me to explore Stockholm’s urban environment as a collage of actors and political operations that press racial inequalities into the structure of the city.
Chapter 4- Methodology

4.1- Research Design

My research design incorporates a qualitative, inductive case study, within which interviews are collected and a critical discourse analysis is applied to interview content.

My initial ideas for this project gradually changed form as I came to understand the limits of what was accessible, achievable, and appropriate. At the start of my research, I was prepared to embark on a small-scale ethnographic case study of either Rinkeby or Alby, but I became aware that this approach would be both difficult and incompatible with the arguments I was presenting. Instead of focusing on the experience of segregation, I have chosen to see the process of segregation in the wide-angle context of Swedish planning policy. I did, moreover, consider an approach based on large samples and questionnaires, but I determined that the nuances of linking race and power would be ill-served and possibly obscured by data on that scale. Alby is an appropriate case study for these issues, as it is an area where recent policy reforms have had a clear impact on housing, job access, and minority empowerment. My decision to look into Alby as a case study was also inspired in part by the work of Mitchell Reardon and Christian Dymén, two employees of Nordregio who used Botkyrka municipality as a case study for understanding social exclusion in Europe within the TIPSE project. While they work from quite a different theoretical framework, I will draw on some of their findings during my analysis of Alby.

I do not directly deal with the role of physical form or the built environment in this thesis, although there is some excellent work being done on the subject by researchers at KTH. I concur with Öresjö et al (2005, 15) that the “primary problem” in Stockholm’s poorer neighbourhoods is not build quality or physical appearance per se, but rather “unemployment, other forms of social exclusion and discriminatory practices in mainstream Swedish society”. This is also in line with the definition of segregation that I operationalize within my case study- I focus on segregation as a political, discursive process.

While qualitative case studies have their limitations, particularly in terms of generalizability and verification bias (Flyvbjerg 2006, 219), I found that it was the most appropriate method for understanding segregation in Stockholm. By understanding Alby as an exemplar within wider trends of racialization and liberalization, it became possible for me to tie together my theoretical approach with robust support from targeted interviews. In Fish’s (1989, 344) words, case studies can provide the “precinct” necessary for delineating social practices. Alby gives my interpretive approach to segregation the context and form that allows Sweden’s discursive practices to be assessed. The case of Alby is also reasonably generalizable and has much in common with other relatively deprived, racialized suburbs around Stockholm’s urban core. Alby is similar to these suburbs in terms of racial demographics, employment levels, income, architecture, and housing tenure pattern. Evidence for this can be seen in the

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7 TIPSE (The Territorial Dimension of Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe), was an applied research project constructed within the framework of the ESPON 2013 program.
8 Kungliga Tekniska högskolan; in English, the Royal Institute of Technology. Here I am thinking specifically of Ann Legeby’s work.
figures from Östh (2013) used throughout this text, and more data is available within both my Case Study and Annex CD.

Within my analysis of Alby is a form of critical discourse analysis (CDA), utilized as a way to “make transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures” (Sheyholislami 2001, 1). I do not take discourse as a synonym for ‘debate’ or ‘discussion’; discourse is instead a function of “language use”, a ‘way of speaking’ about a particular phenomenon (Wodak & Meyer 2009, 5). CDA approaches discourse as “socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned”, intertwined with “situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities and relationships between people and groups of people” (Wodak & Meyer 2009, 6).

As a method, CDA fits well within a post-structuralist epistemological frame, and is uniquely suited to identifying patterns of racialized discourse (and also, in Sweden’s case, post-racial discourse) within plans, policies, and interview data. To see reality as socially constructed is to see language as socially contingent in the same way. There is, as Lord’s (2013, 8) reading of Wittgenstein shows, a multitude of “language games” within planning, a collage of deeply politicized discourses replete with assumptions about the nature of social organization.

Within my case study and discussion, I apply CDA to quotations from interviews and (less frequently) to several excerpts from Alby’s neighbourhood plan and Stockholm’s regional plan. The interview material is more directly relevant for my case study, while the planning documents themselves are somewhat dated, lack detail, and focus on broad ‘visions’. The stilted rhetoric of these documents is, in itself, a finding, but it means that the content of these plans are not significant within my case study. Nonetheless, both the documents and interview material exist within my same CDA framework, and I assess them as a way of evidencing and understanding the connections between power, race, and neoliberal trends. By utilizing CDA within my fieldwork, my goal is to show the ways in which discursive, embedded constructions of racial ‘otherness’ (alongside neoliberal norms) have contributed to residential segregation and economic disadvantage within Alby.

My research questions are complex, but they are well-served by the case study and discourse analysis that I engage with. The challenges of Stockholm’s racial segregation, and the related ‘racialized effects’ of particular policies, can be (at least partially) understood by analysing an area that typifies racial stigmatization and segregation within the city. Patterns of urban segregation “have to be studied and understood on the local level”, as indicators produced on the NUTS 3 or national level tend to obscure sensitivities in movement patterns for different ethnic groups (Dymén & Reardon 2013, 33). National-level policies and trends are absolutely relevant for understanding segregation, but case study-level data allows planners to see the most pointed effects of these policies and trends. Moreover, understanding local-level effects can aid in the formulation of policy responses to segregation. For these reasons, my research design pulls together a case study with targeted interviews, alongside a critical discourse analysis meant to illuminate the discursive processes that contribute to racialized segregation patterns.
4.2- Method Details

Within my fieldwork, there were two target interview groups.

Group 1: Listed within the Appendix, these twenty-one interviews were part of my ‘scoping’ process, and are not directly quoted within my case study. I purposefully cast a wide net when choosing these interview participants, as I wanted to make sure that I had a thorough understanding of the current precedents on segregation research in Sweden. I spoke to researchers and policy workers in institutes (Nordregio), community foundations (Mångkulturellt Centrum), think tanks (FORES) universities (KTH, Stockholm University), districts (Rinkeby-Kista), and other locations. The background of my interviewees varied widely—some had a specific background in planning or geography, but others were architects, sociologists, or economists. My goal was not to combine all these perspectives, but rather to grasp different ways of understanding segregation in Stockholm and to see where I could position my conceptual approach within the work already done. My interviews were semi-structured, anchored around the themes of discrimination, urban policy, and suburban segregation. Some of these were recorded, but most were relatively informal meetings where I took notes and highlighted key responses. A full list of interviews and contacts can be found in the Appendix to this paper.

Group 2: Listed below in Table 2, these five interviewees were part of my case study on Alby. As with my interviews in Group 1, these were semi-structured, centred on the role of private actors in Alby and the changing nature of planning goals in the area. The goal of my case study interviews was to understand how planners in Alby valued the role of private development, and to determine how they felt that private housing might or might not contribute to racial segregation and gentrification within North Botkyrka. These are the key public planners in Alby, and they are broadly representative of the planning professionals in Botkyrka municipality as a whole. The only key planner in the municipality I was not able to interview was Lars Olson (Botkyrka’s Planning Chief), as he was out of office during my visits. My case study interviews took place within the Botkyrka kommun building, with the exception of Dennis Latifi, who I met in his office in Alby. All of these were recorded with a dictaphone, and the MP3 files are included on the Annex CD accompanying this thesis.

Most of my interviews were lengthy, extending over 90 minutes, as I sought to establish a strong rapport and facilitate open discussion on the issues of racialization, segregation, and discrimination. All of my interviewees agreed to be named in this paper. All interviews were conducted in English and carried out in person.

Table 2: Case Study Interviews (Alby, Group 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Latifi</td>
<td>Alby Development Manager</td>
<td>April 16th 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per-Anders Framgård</td>
<td>Botkyrka Architect and Development Manager</td>
<td>April 17th 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva Berggren</td>
<td>Botkyrka Municipal Statistician</td>
<td>March 17th, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malin Croner</td>
<td>Alby Strategic Planner</td>
<td>April 17th 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaisa-Leena Aksli</td>
<td>Alby Strategic Planner</td>
<td>April 17th 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3- Reflexivity & Relevance

My position as a researcher forces me to be reflexive and self-aware in my approach to social issues in Stockholm. The ways in which I have collected and analysed information for this piece are inevitably “imbued with theoretical, epistemological, and ontological assumptions” about my subject and the issues most appropriate to explore (Mauthner & Doucet 2003, 413). The fact that my study involves politically and socially marginalized populations adds another layer of difficulty here. Moreover, there are a number of ethical tensions encountered when researching race and disadvantage. I am working from a “privileged space”, where even my ability to discuss problems of representation and racial discrimination takes place from a position of relative power (Pillow 2003, 185). This is a difficult hurdle to overcome, but I did make a particular effort to include the voices of racial minorities within my fieldwork. Among these are Tanvir Mansur, Malaika Mikaelsson, and Fereshteh Karbalaee, who shared with me some of their personal experiences of discrimination and alienation. Despite this, of course I cannot claim to represent or speak for the experiences of Stockholm’s many racial minorities; rather, I approach racial issues in Stockholm as a foreign student who sees many relevant flaws in Sweden’s policy frameworks.

My case study interviewees, as planning practitioners within Botkyrka, also bring with them their own biases and assumptions. Due to their professional focus on housing and the built environment (e.g., projects involving green space, housing renovations, and open public squares), they generally approach stigmatization and deprivation as problems that can be alleviated through physical planning. However, as I show in my case study, this does not mean they always agree on the implications of Alby’s recent developments—my interviewees brought with them multiple interpretations of segregation and the value of privatization.

Segregation is, at present, one of the most pressing planning issues in Stockholm. My case study utilizes critical race theory within an analysis of privatization and urban segregation, a combination that has little precedent within Swedish research. This approach opens up potential for new types of needs-based policy responses, something that could be of great value for other researchers and planners. My hope is that the work I do in this piece can be built upon and amended by further studies exploring the links between racial disadvantage and segregation within Stockholm’s urban space.

4.4- Limitations

As with any research project, there are many limitations, caveats, and relevant phenomena that I am not able to explore in this text. There are, for example, numerous discourses and factors that matter for segregation that I do not have space to properly address. These include, most notably, any sustained discussion of nationalism, gender inequalities, inter-minority ethnic conflict, classism, intersectionality, and religious differences. Moreover, my position as a non-Swedish speaker limited the types of materials and actors I was able to access. Because of this, I draw upon data and document analyses that have been collected or conducted by other researchers.

The case study that I use (Alby), while reasonably generalizable as a poor, racialized suburb within Stockholm, nonetheless cannot be assumed to stand in for the complex segregation
patterns all throughout Sweden. Moreover, Stockholm’s city space is constantly in flux, and these settlement patterns can change quickly and in unpredictable ways, something I cannot account for. I should also address the risk of verification bias - that is, the “tendency [of a study] to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions” (Flyvbjerg 2006, 17). This is a risk with all research, qualitative and quantitative alike, and of course I cannot claim to come to Alby as a ‘blank slate’ free of bias and experience. However, my analysis and my arguments have been continually challenged and tested through debate with other researchers, and I have attempted to make the link between my data, theoretical support, and interpretations as clear as possible within my Case Study and Discussion. My placement at Nordregio gave me great opportunities in this regard, as I was able to discuss ideas with my colleagues at every step of the writing process.
Chapter 5- Alby: Planning, Housing, and the Stigma of Racialized Space

5.1- Characterizing Alby

Alby is a small suburb tucked away in the southwest of Stockholm Region, within the Botkyrka municipality (in Swedish, ‘Botkyrka kommun’). Compared to the central areas of Stockholm, the neighbourhood is quite poor, and it is frequently cited as one of Stockholm’s key ‘problem areas’, alongside Husby, Akalla, Rinkeby, Tensta, nearby Fittja, and others (Nordin 2005, 164).

Table 3: Alby at a glance (Source: Botkyrka kommun, 2013)

| Population | 13,243 |
| Unemployment % | 32%⁹ |
| Foreign background % | 78% |
| Public housing % | 75% |
| Development period | Majority of homes built 1970-1975 |
| Average income | 175,400Kr¹⁰ per year (before tax) |

⁹ This figure is a percentage of the total labour force (age 20-64) who are not engaged in economic activity. Students and members of the military are excluded.

¹⁰ This is approximately 18,900 Euros per year. The figure for Stockholm City as a whole is 327,100Kr (about 36,000 Euros per year) (Botkyrka kommun, 2013).
Botkyrka as a whole has been characterized as “the most resource-poor municipality within Greater Stockholm” for the past five years, and currently has the largest proportion of citizens with a foreign background (53.2%) of any municipality in Sweden (Rosales 2013, 5). The majority of this population is concentrated in North Botkyrka, an area which includes the neighbourhoods of Norsborg, Slagsta, Hallunda, Fittja, and Alby. North Botkyrka also contains a heavy concentration of public rental apartments (provided by the municipal housing company, Botkyrkabyggen).
North Botkyrka was developed primarily in the early 1970s as part of Sweden’s ‘Million Homes Program’ (in Swedish, ‘Miljonprogrammet’), a large-scale, state-funded housing initiative that constructed nearly one million new apartments between 1965 and 1975. The largest, most iconic clusters of these apartments were built in selected areas outside Sweden’s largest cities (Öresjö et al 2005, 4). The ideals behind these constructions were, for their time, quite radical. MP (Million Program) areas were meant to embody a new Swedish suburban ideal, as developers crafted modernist housing blocks on scenic patches of land that were within driving distance of urban centres. They were to serve as functional ‘bedroom communities’ and provide evidence of Sweden’s stability and wealth. However, by the 1980s, population growth had slowed and consumer tastes had changed. Increasingly, the largest MP areas became characterized as peripheral, undesirable, and ugly. Refugees, labour migrants, and other marginalized groups have since been funnelled into these neighbourhoods, while most white Swedes moved to inner-city districts or into suburbs with more private housing (Borgegård et al 1998, 213). Sweden’s current ‘problem’ suburbs are, “almost without exception”, neighbourhoods constructed in the MP era (Andersson & Molina 2003, 276). This narrative is well-known throughout Sweden, and the term ‘Million Program’ is now somewhat pejorative. The fact that these areas currently see the worst of Sweden’s deprivation and racialization is a cruel inversion of the progressive ideals behind MP development.
Despite these issues, Alby is not experiencing significant urban decay or any particularly poor infrastructure. By European standards, the quality of life offered by the physical environment is fairly high. Alby enjoys subway and bus connections to central Stockholm, as well as good access to a shopping centre and a nearby lake. Crime rates are relatively low—lower, actually, than most districts in central Stockholm (Hübinette 2014, 3). However, Alby is poor and struggling with extremely high unemployment alongside low social mobility. In fact, Alby’s average income (see Table 3) is close to the Swedish relative poverty line. Moreover, foreign-background residents of Alby are often subject to stigmatization, institutionalised discrimination, and sometimes profound racism. Nordin (2005, 164) argues that the

Figure 7: Share of population at-risk-of-poverty (below 50% of Swedish median income) among 6,400 nearest neighbours in Stockholm. Alby is circled. Map created by John Östh (2013).
discourse surrounding Alby and other peripheral MP areas amounts to a sort of “ghettoization” due to the xenophobic and racialized depictions of these neighbourhoods in Swedish media. Despite the relative tranquillity of these areas, residents are implicitly depicted as potentially deviant cultural outsiders.

In 2013, researchers at the Botkyrka kommun launched an extensive project that sought to compile harmful ‘rumours’ about the area as a way to understand how the municipality was stigmatized within Greater Stockholm. Their research took the form of an online questionnaire delivered to residents around Botkyrka, asking readers to share rumours they had heard regarding the municipality. The results were unnerving. Respondents noted common racial invectives, stereotypes about criminal ‘babbes’\footnote{A term that roughly translates to ‘baboons’. An offensive racial epithet sometimes directed towards dark-skinned Swedish residents.}, misinformation about social welfare usage, and insinuations that residents of northern Botkyrka were stupid and ungrateful (Rosales 2013, 8). Also commonly reported was a sense that non-white Swedes and migrants posed a vague ‘threat’ to Swedish traditions and values. For many, this is the experience of Alby and the wider area of north Botkyrka: they are treated as racialized outsiders, locked out of job markets, and subject to marginalization in ways both obvious and subtle.

5.2- Diffused Responsibility: The Receding Role of Public Actors in Alby

Alby’s most recent development plan, prepared in 2009 by Botkyrka municipality, envisions a grand future for the area:

“Our vision: With well-designed buildings, vibrant public spaces, sparkling water, dynamic homes and workplaces, inspiring schools and libraries, exciting restaurants, theaters, and athletic fields, Alby encompasses work and play, creative encounters and new skills.” (Botkyrka kommun 2009)

The plan, moreover, stresses that a “local area perspective” is essential for meeting the “particular challenges and opportunities” present in the neighbourhood. This kind of language is common in Swedish development rhetoric, as municipalities work in relative isolation from each other and tend to treat problems as ‘municipal’ or ‘local’ issues (Öresjö et al 2005, 3).

Since Alby’s plan was written, the neighbourhood has experienced a number of significant changes. In 2013, a total of 1,300 public rental apartments (along with adjacent pieces of land) were sold to a private investment company named Mitt Alby AB. Mitt Alby is a new firm, but it operates as a subsidiary of Byggmästare Anders J Ahlström Fastighets AB, a company that retains a reputation for venture capitalism and high-risk real estate investment (Latifi, fieldnotes 16/4/2015). Mitt Alby has promised to build 700 new (private, mostly tenant-owned) apartments to ‘revitalize’ the area, ideally attracting outsiders as well as enticing wealthier residents to stay. The newly privatized homes are still rental apartments, but Mitt Alby is making efforts to convert them into tenant-owned dwellings via a ‘right-to-
buy’ scheme\textsuperscript{12}. Alby’s residents (including those who were living in the apartments to be sold) were not consulted regarding the decision (Latifi, fieldnotes 16/4/2015). The sale did not go unnoticed, and many residents reacted strongly to the idea that private actors were now determining the fate of the neighbourhood. In fact, the sale sparked a significant local protest movement- the ‘Alby är inte till salu/Alby is not for sale’ campaign drew considerable media coverage in Stockholm, and residents launched a petition calling for a referendum on Mitt Alby’s purchase (Thörn 2013; Radio Sweden 2013). The petition was not successful.

In essence, Alby’s sale was made to serve two goals. Firstly, it fit with Botkyrka’s goal of promoting ‘mixed development’ and offering a variety of housing types in each neighbourhood. Secondly, and most pressingly, the municipality needed money to fund renovations for the area’s now-aging MP apartments. The sale of these 1,300 apartments was one of my key topics of interest when interviewing public actors in Botkyrka. I sought to understand what the sale meant, what motivated it, and how the role of the private sector might be changing development in the neighbourhood. Some of the responses I received were surprising.

“I think it’s scary to sell [to private actors]... I totally understand why people are scared, and in one way I think it’s horrible.” (Crone, fieldnotes 17/4/2015)

Malin Croner and Kaisa-Leena Alksi, two municipal employees working with public space and physical planning in Alby, each expressed strong reservations about the sale. Malin in particular felt that it sent a potentially damaging precedent, pulling housing maintenance and control towards profit-driven entities. Eva Berggren, the head statistician at Botkyrka kommun, also expressed mixed feelings about the sale of the apartments. She contended that it “had to be done” given the poor financial situation of the municipality, and saw it as a pragmatic, if imperfect, outcome (Berggren, fieldnotes 17/3/2015). Each of the planners I spoke to in the municipality also echoed this point, many expressing discomfort with Stockholm’s arc towards housing liberalization. All stressed the increasing importance that private actors played in urban development.

Malin, Kaisa-Leena, Per-Anders, and Dennis all noted that there had been some problematic examples of private housing development in Sweden. Recent private development in Rosengård, a similarly poor MP suburb of Malmö, was noted as a failure. Malin commented that Rosengård’s private complex was marred by poor maintenance, with apartments afflicted by “mould and cockroaches” alongside inflated prices. Dennis noted that (smaller-scale) private development in nearby Fittja had similar problems, resulting in rental apartments that were both more expensive and poorer in quality than those offered by Botkyrkabyggen.

Time will tell if Alby’s sale will be considered as a positive example or a grave mistake. Interviewees noted that Mitt Alby seemed to be handling things well so far, making an effort to listen to local concerns and improve housing quality- of course, it must be said that if local concerns were listened to in the first place, the sale would not have happened at all.

\textsuperscript{12}More specifically, residents of the newly privatized apartments are being pressured to purchase shares in the apartment blocks, in line with the Swedish \textit{bostadsrättsförening} housing arrangement.
Gentrification and rising prices (at least on the private market) are virtually inevitable unless Mitt Alby is remarkably careful and socially conscious—particularly considering the company’s plans to increase the stock of tenant-owned dwellings (Andersson & Turner 2014, 16). Prices for municipal flats can only rise each year with the rate of inflation, unless the resident makes renovations that increase the value of the property. Private properties are not bound by these same restrictions, and private rentals since 2011 have been allowed to adjust closer to the pure ‘market rate’ in Stockholm.

What is clear here is that municipalities like Botkyrka are not given the resources they need to adequately care for and provide housing. In effect, due to recent reforms, they are meant to operate like businesses—they are expected to turn a profit—while also providing for the social needs of a large area. The result is that municipalities, particularly in poorer parts of Sweden, are stretched thin and forced to make compromises that sometimes betray their best intentions. Private actors are sought out to fill some of the gaps left by the withdrawal of the state throughout the past few decades. To compound these issues, Stockholm is facing a severe housing shortage alongside intense land speculation, something that is starting to affect even the city’s ‘less desirable’ areas.

“The image is that Alby has empty flats, but we have a 5-year waiting list for apartments in this area... Prices [for private dwellings], both in here and [wider] Botkyrka, have gone up the most in the whole Stockholm area, by 75%.” (Framgård, fieldnotes 17/4/2015)

For apartments in central Stockholm, waiting times stretch into decades, so Alby’s 5-year queue for flats is not extreme by regional standards. However, waiting lists for Alby’s dwellings have only become a reality in the past few years. This paints an uneasy picture for the future of the neighbourhood. It is likely that private actors will continue to show interest in the area, if only because demand for housing in Stockholm is so high that any new developments will be quickly purchased. However, this also means that prices are likely to rise dramatically in the coming years if the Swedish state continues to take a passive role in regards to public housing upkeep and construction.

At first glance, it may seem like this process of liberalization is a fundamental departure from the more egalitarian norms that informed Swedish housing development in the 1960s. In some ways, it certainly is—the private sales of land and housing currently taking place throughout Sweden are unprecedented, and the role of the state in housing development has been radically redefined since the 1980s. However, the situation is more complex than a simple reversal of norms. Baeten (2012, 23) notes some surprising continuities between the “social-democratic era” and the modern trend of “[Swedish] neoliberal urban planning”. Specifically, he contends that “like... social-democratic planning, neoliberal planning is driven by an unbridled belief in economic growth and the possibility to build away the unwanted city of deprivation” (Baeten 2012, 23). In Alby, it means that projects focused on physical form and mixed housing development are deployed as broadly applicable, catch-all solutions to the region’s high unemployment and racial stigmatization.

This is Loïc Wacquant’s (2004, 5) ‘neoliberal logic’ coming to life in Alby. Attracting private investment is structurally incentivized and promoted as a positive, even essential, method for availing vaguely defined ‘problem areas’ and social challenges. I am reminded also of Neil
Smith’s contention that the “neoliberal urban strategy” for poverty is to ‘shuffle it around’ via processes of gentrification and passive displacement (Smith 2002, 2). That is certainly not the intention of the planners I spoke to, but it is hard to see what else these cycles of private speculation and investment could lead to. Alby’s planners are forced to work within a framework and a development logic that leaves them unable to properly address segregation. Responsibility for Alby’s complex socioeconomic needs has been diffused between public and private actors, each operating with different goals and constraints. Alby is thus muddled by poor multilevel governance- Botkyrka municipality is expected to solve housing problems that have largely emanated from weak state-level guidance and development practices that stretch back decades.

To be clear- my argument here is not that private actors like Mitt Alby are intrinsically destructive or that they have no place in the urban development process. My concern, rather, is that the handing of social responsibilities to the private sector represents a dangerous and problematic precedent. Mitt Alby may care deeply about racialized stigmatization and sustainable development- but they do not have to, and there are no consequences for the firm if Mitt Alby simply sells its apartments on to a new owner. Mitt Alby does not have the same transparency as the public municipal actors, nor do they embody any real democratic legitimacy. These kinds of sales are not neutral or simple economic arrangements; they are political decisions with real consequences for Stockholm’s minorities, and Alby’s sale must be analysed as such.

5.3- Homes for Whom?

“The real problem isn’t the place, the real problem is the stigmatization and the reaction that you meet... the way you feel when you go outside [Alby]... The normative rich world outside has bad preconceptions of the area... Should you break the community here [through privatization]?” (Aksli, fieldnotes 17/4/2015)

“It’s not a municipal problem, it’s a national problem. In these areas, if you do the renovating needed for these houses, you need to raise the rent by 50%. That’s impossible for those who are living in these areas... this is already a national problem, this will become a bigger national problem, and the national level refuses to get involved... where will these people live?” (Latifi, fieldnotes 16/4/2015)

Municipalities like Botkyrka are increasingly short on funds and expected to manage hugely complex socioeconomic problems in isolation. Offloading some of this responsibility to private actors like Mitt Alby may appear logical. However, there is a human cost implicit in these developments.

As Dennis Latifi notes in his stark assessment of the situation, rising home prices are, in some form, inevitable in Alby. As prices are more flexible on the private market, this means that, within a few years, many of Alby’s residents may be unable to afford new developments. So, for whom are these homes being built? Who benefits from privatization and gentrification?
In a piece that has now become frequently cited among planning researchers in Stockholm, Brett Christophers (2013, 885) calls the modern Swedish housing regime a “monstrous hybrid” that fuses egalitarian legacy with potent Anglo-American neoliberalism. He contends that assessing this movement towards neoliberalisation reveals the “pivotal role currently being played by the Swedish housing system in the creation, reproduction, and intensification of socio-economic inequality” (Christophers 2013, 885). Understanding Alby’s sale in this light, it is clear that “only a relatively privileged socio-economic minority” will likely be able to access new private homes in the neighbourhood (Christophers 2013, 906), particularly since Stockholm’s housing shortage is so extreme.

Lind (2015, 15), reflecting on Christopher’s piece, argues that another key reason for Stockholm’s low-income housing shortage lies in “an unholy alliance of environmental groups, home-owners and also tax payers in general that want to avoid high costs for the municipality”. Colourful language notwithstanding, Lind makes a strong point here- the lack of new housing development is firmly in the favour of many homeowners in the Stockholm area, and there is a general concern that an increase in rental housing would lead to a decline in usable green space and lower property values. In my view, this hypothesis connects well with the phenomenon of ‘white avoidance’ in Sweden discussed by Andersson (2013). I contend, in other words, that there is not only the fear of falling property prices and rental profits for homeowners, but additionally a sort of NIMBYism towards immigrants and non-white residents that keeps public rental apartment development at a minimum. This is how the logic of segregation connects with liberal policy- as responsibilities get diffused and space becomes increasingly commercialized, segregationist movement patterns intensify and racial minorities are increasingly pushed to urban margins. Liberalization trends make segregation more intense by rendering it politically discrete, pushing responsibility down from the state level and twisting the terms of economic engagement. Those who are most negatively affected by these developments tend to be the least powerful actors. Poor immigrants do not make for good marketing.

As with the developments in Sweden’s past, there is a certain racialized hierarchy being implicitly preserved here. Relative poverty is concentrated among the region’s non-white residents. The role of private actors in creating ‘attractive spaces’ and removing stigmas thus means pushing out racialized poverty and crafting homes that gel with a white, middle-class lifestyle. It is, in financial terms, beneficial for the municipality to push out poor minorities and bring in wealthy residents; in Sweden, the majority of income tax is paid to the municipality, meaning that increases in local tax incomes are directly linked to higher municipal budgets. In this sense, Alby’s strategy for combating stigmatization and racism is not to confront discriminatory attitudes, not to tackle structural poverty, but to remove the people at the bottom of Sweden’s socioeconomic hierarchy as a means of attracting investment and funding services. New trends both in Alby and Stockholm are still informed by a logic that treats all communities as being ‘equal’ and assumes that access to these new developments is fair, glossing over dramatic inequalities and the differing needs of Alby’s diverse population. The effects of Stockholm’s policies are thus depoliticized and deeply racialized, affecting racial groups unevenly and perhaps further exacerbating Sweden’s growing inequalities.
At present, there is no real solution, no coherent plan available to deal with this tangle of issues. Botkyrka’s planners are aware of the risks of gentrification, but feel relatively powerless to combat it, hamstrung by conflicting interests and a need to preserve profit margins. One outcome (which is already in motion) is that municipalities will continually have to submit more and more power over to private developers. Should the Swedish state step in and take a stronger role in building and subsidising public housing, some of this might be avoided.

The challenges in Alby are not only ‘local’ problems, they are indicative of the wider structural forces behind Stockholm’s racial segregation. The operations and complications that Alby illuminates – stigmatization, institutionalized racism, misdirected policy, and weak state involvement – are all significant for understanding how Sweden’s cities have become so fractured. The challenges related to Stockholm’s racial segregation thus manifest themselves clearly in Alby. Race and power are important concepts for analysing Stockholm’s situation, as they allow planners to see the racialized narrative beneath the development of modern Swedish public policy, a narrative that has consistently marginalized non-white Swedes.
Chapter 6- Discussion & Reflection

6.1- Structural Discrimination within Swedish Development Trends

Given priority within Alby’s plans is the goal of ‘mixed development’, something that was referenced as an ideal by most of my interviewees in Botkyrka. Sweden, like many European countries, stresses these kinds of “housing diversification” and “social mix” strategies as key desegregation measures (Bolt 2009, 397). This is despite the fact that there is limited evidence of these types of policies being effective. Bolt (2009, 239), reflecting on a meta-analysis of case studies from the UK, Finland, Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands, asserts that “each of them is characterized by a huge gap between an ambitious anti-segregation policy rhetoric and the limited effectiveness of desegregation policies”. Galster (2007, 32), in a similar review of cross-European empirical evidence, concludes that “there is little definitive to indicate that the net result for aggregate social utility will be positive if neighbourhoods are socially mixed”.

Why have the results of these policies been so underwhelming, and why does the logic behind them continue to be so influential in Sweden? To the former question, one answer is that they fail to “[improve] the well-being of the disadvantaged absolutely”, approaching segregation as a localized physical problem instead of a broader socio-political one (Galster 2007, 32). To answer the latter question, these approaches thrive in Sweden because they link together profitable (and structurally necessary) neoliberal trends with Swedish political norms, obliviously treating residents as if they all have fair and equal access to housing, jobs, and city space. To be able to “build away… deprivation”, as Baten (2012, 23) argues, is an attractive alternative to confronting structural disadvantage.

This is the ongoing pattern behind planning and development in Stockholm. Jon Loit, in an excellent critical analysis of Stockholm’s flagship development projects, titles his paper with a question: “A World Class Stockholm- For Whom?” He concludes that, despite their stated goals of ‘sustainable development’, Stockholm’s projects are dominated by planning norms that serve the “neoliberal subject... based on the city’s urban centre ideals and middle-class consumption patterns” (Loit 2014, iv). The answer to Loit’s titular question, then, is quite clear: this is a world-class Stockholm built for middle-class white Swedes, as wealth, power, and access to private housing is concentrated within this group. This is, increasingly, a city that is at odds with itself- simultaneously engaging in a token celebration of diversity while pushing non-European populations to spatial and discursive peripheries. Within municipal plans, to remove Alby’s stigma is to make it more palatable to investors, to make it more ‘mixed’ in a variety of ways. But this is not empowerment, and this is not an adequate response to Stockholm’s deeply racialized inequalities.

These trends within Stockholm show strong links with the processes behind American racial segregation and the discursive justifications used for concentrating racialized poverty. Within Botkyrka’s ‘rumours’ report, Hübnette’s reflections on racism in Sweden, and the Mångkulturellt Centrum’s Afrophobia report, we see the “association of blackness with criminality” (Wacquant 2005, 128), as African residents of Stockholm are not just outsiders but threatening outsiders. We see this process extend to other groups as well: Sweden’s political climate is increasingly prone to essentializing stereotypes and ‘Orientalist’ depictions
of Asian and Middle Eastern minorities. These depictions frame non-white residents as trapped in a disconnected “immigrant culture” that is fundamentally incompatible with a democratic, open Europe (Schierup & Ålund 2011, 54). In connection with this, we see the “exoticizing of the ghetto”, as Stockholm’s deprived suburbs are represented and reproduced in ways that imagine dangerous “pathologies” and conflate racial, ethnic, and national categories (Wacquant 1997, 348; Nordin 2005, 164).

Most strikingly, we see the way that neoliberal norms work to legitimize segregation, creating the privatized spaces of exclusion that have remade Stockholm into one of Europe’s most racially fractured cities. As Sweden has rolled back state involvement and emphasized the role of private actors in urban development, it has partaken in what was once a uniquely American “ideological project” (Wacquant 2006, 3). Through promotion of an ideal “free market” in housing development and the “trope of individual responsibility” excusing (and depoliticizing) patterns of deprivation, Sweden’s cities have gradually shifted to a very different kind of urban order than its history might lead observers to expect (Wacquant 2006, 3; Christophers 2013, 889). In tandem with the region’s tightly coiled, “ever-more exclusivist” labour market, the effect on minorities is devastating (Schierup & Ålund 2011, 48). This combination goes a long towards explaining why Sweden has some of the worst labour market integration outcomes of the OECD states.

Stockholm’s spatial segregation and labour market exclusion are thus tightly intertwined. The retrenchment of the Swedish state in planning and housing has denied minorities the proper tools and structural legitimacy to push against racialized markets and find gainful employment. Furthermore, as Amartya Sen (2000, 21) notes, “unemployment feeds the politics of intolerance and racism”, something that is distressingly clear throughout Europe. A vicious feedback loop conjoins Sweden’s past and present struggles to accommodate racial minorities, while unaddressed exclusionary practices link together to fence off political power from non-white groups. To properly understand and address spatial segregation, planners must look beyond rote conceptions of physical separation and see segregation as a corrosive process inextricably fused with the exclusionary assumptions and practices that saturate Swedish socioeconomic life.

In sum, what can be seen in Alby (alongside Stockholm as a whole) are planning and housing regimes that structurally exclude and marginalize low-income, non-white residents. These trends in Sweden have been consistently criticized in European literature and have been (at least in Botkyrka’s case) recognized by planners and consultants as destructive and undesirable. They endure, however, because of a decentralized, neoliberal framework that all but forces municipalities to cede power to private actors and prioritize ‘choice’ above residential empowerment. These trends are, moreover, justified by a Swedish ethnonationalist discourse that treats non-white residents as racialized outsiders. There is one further phenomenon I will discuss, something I have so far referenced but not assessed in detail: the ironic role that the Swedish vision of equality has played in promoting disadvantage and segregation.
6.2- Problematizing ‘Equality’ and ‘Integration’

“It’s politically correct to say that diversity is good, but to take the next step... I disagree with my Swedish colleagues here; I do not think that everyone is alike. I think you can have different solutions for different people.” (Kroes, fieldnotes 14/4/2015)

In a wide-ranging interview with Evert Kroes, a Dutch regional planner at Stockholm County Council specializing in segregation, he confessed that he was deeply frustrated by his co-workers’ apparent failure to take structural discrimination seriously. Kroes contended that Swedish hiring practices and development ideals were inadequate, even archaic, in the face of the country’s rapid demographic changes. He was equally critical of the Swedish “integration industry”, a web of programs meant to facilitate Swedish language skills and job access that have had notoriously poor results on the ground (Kroes, fieldnotes 14/4/2015). Sweden’s integration measures may win the country high rankings, but they seem to have done little in the way of improving racial segregation, job access, or housing access. At the end of these integration programs, of course, it is the employer, landlord, or university who must accept minority applicants, and that process is not happening often enough in Sweden (Kroes, fieldnotes 14/4/2015). In surveys of Swedish employers, Kroes noted that it was often perceived as a “threat” to employ someone with a non-Swedish background. He took a dim view of Sweden’s future, arguing that if proper reforms are not made to address exclusionary mechanisms in the labour market, Stockholm was “going to have more riots” (Kroes, fieldnotes 14/4/2015). The 2013 unrest in Husby, in his eyes, might just be the beginning of a much more dramatic situation.

To improve job access for minorities, it is essential that traditional hiring practices are updated with the realization that one type of recruitment mechanism cannot work for everyone. There needs to be a greater acknowledgement that fighting discrimination and disadvantage is not a passive process, as existing market trends intrinsically benefit the lifestyles of wealthy white Swedes (Kroes, fieldnotes 14/4/2015). In fact, the same equality policy that is so admired internationally has, discouragingly, actually been used as a justification for preserving admissions practices and market mechanisms that siphon economic power and academic opportunity away from non-white minorities.

In 2003, Uppsala University tested a quota system for its prestigious law program, reserving 30 of 300 spots for students of a foreign background within Sweden. Ironically, this attempt to promote inclusiveness and diversity resulted in an embarrassing outcome for Uppsala, reinforcing the very patterns of inequality that university officials were hoping to subvert. Two white Swedish students, denied admission (ostensibly) because they did not fit the requirements for this quota, sued the university and won soundly.

In 2005, the Swedish Supreme Court ruled that the quota at Uppsala University’s law program violated Swedish equality laws, as they were allowing national and racial backgrounds to factor into the admission process, thus voiding the ideal (and the illusion) of a purely meritocratic university system. One of the students behind the lawsuit, Cecilia Lönn, had this to say in the aftermath of the case:

"It feels great. It is now established that all have equal rights, regardless of whether they are Swedish, Somali or Norwegian.” [translated from Swedish] (Hernadi 2006)
Gunnar Strömmer, Cecilia’s lawyer, also maintained after the case that “affirmative action only creates new inequalities and reinforces divisions” [translated from Swedish] (Hernadi 2006). In light of the present segregation and economic divisions within Sweden, these quotes are troubling and deeply problematic. The assumption that all individuals start on equal footing, with equal access to the education system (to say nothing of the labour and housing markets) is simply inaccurate. If there is no effort made to counteract structural inequalities and racial discrimination, it is difficult to see how this situation could improve. The issue, as Martha Nussbaum (2003, 35) articulates, is that “[while] most states consider equality important... they do not ask perspicuously enough what the right space is within which to make the relevant comparisons”. Put differently, ‘equality’ is not a self-evident concept, and it can be a naïve way to frame social and economic problems if the differing resources, needs, and capabilities of populations are not taken into account. Planners should not treat equality as a neutral, inherently positive concept; it is, on the contrary, a discursively constructed norm perpetually suffused with a variety of moral beliefs, political ideals, and economic assumptions.

Impossible to avoid in Swedish reports and goals regarding segregation is the phrase multiculturism, something I have touched on at a few points in this paper. The term reverberates through European debates on immigration and difference, and the phrase has come to be both a rallying cry and a punchline for different political parties and academics. Sandercock (2003), for example, adamantly argues that multiculturalism is a concept worth salvaging and supporting. As much as I appreciate her other arguments involving democratic planning processes, I see little evidence that retaining multiculturalism as an ideal does racial minorities any favours, particularly in Sweden. Multiculturalism implies passive coexistence and tolerance (and, yes, ‘equality’), but leaves little room for fairness, empowerment, and positive interaction. At its worst, multiculturalism can be read as an excuse to compartmentalize minorities away from power (Sandercock 2003, 101). Dymén & Reardon (2014), drawing from the rhetoric used by the Mångkulturellt Centrum, argue that interculturalism is a better way of theorizing social integration. Interculturalism, as defined by Botkyrka municipality, refers to “exchanges and interaction between human beings with different origins” (Dymén & Reardon 2014, 29). It is a more palatable planning ideal, one that emphasizes acceptance and mutual accommodation while also leaving room for initiatives aimed at wider structural change and empowerment.

As a case-in-point, Stockholm’s regional plans emphasize the goals of making the city “diversity-oriented” (Stockholm Regional Planning Committee 2010, 16) and promoting “multiculturalism” (Stockholm Regional Planning Committee 2010, 12) within workplaces and city spaces. Stockholm, however, is already very diverse, at least within its peripheral suburbs. It is ironic that the problematized ‘ethnic’ suburbs that characterize discrimination in Stockholm are actually the closest to achieving Stockholm’s ideal of demographic diversity.

The most racially and ethnically homogenous neighbourhoods within Stockholm are its wealthiest and whitest: Östermalm, Djurgården, and Södermalm (Kroes, fieldnotes 14/4/2015). Perhaps, as Andersson et al (2010, 31) argue, “areas dominated by immigrants should be called Swedish-scarce rather than immigrant-dense”. However, homogeneity in Stockholm’s wealthy areas is almost never treated as a problem—Swedish discourse would not fault the ‘white Swedish ethnic enclave’ of Östermalm, and such an approach would represent
a forceful challenge to the dominant conceptualization of segregation within Swedish planning. This is another situation where understanding the link between race and power is critical: we must deconstruct Stockholm’s developments and goals with an eye for seeing who has the power to define the problems and the legitimacy to separate the racial ‘Other’. The complex details of various ethnic identities in Fittja and Alby are of little concern in Swedish development goals; residents of these areas are all cast within a narrative of difference because they are not white Swedes.

Despite these critiques, Stockholm’s regional development plan does come to some positive conclusions- most notably, the assertion that “integration… needs to go beyond a one-sided focus on those who are viewed as losers in the segregation process” (RUFS 2010, 16). This conclusion falls in line with Andersson’s (2013) contention that the movement patterns of white Swedes need to be understood as contributing to racial segregation.

There needs to be a turn away from muddied, vapid notions of multiculturalism and a greater recognition of the significance of power, particularly as it relates to race and nativity. Greater care needs to be given to what the rhetoric of integration actually implies, as well as a critical view towards who needs to ‘integrate’ and why. Merely adopting rhetoric that stresses tolerance, equality, and diversity is not enough for Sweden. Anna Rehnvall, a researcher at the Stockholm-based FORES think tank, admitted in an interview that Sweden’s robust welfare and labour market policies were really built “for a different population” than what the country contains in 2015, and are in need of restructuring to accommodate demographic change. The changes that have occurred since the 1960s (most notably the withdrawal of strong state interventions within the housing market) have made the situation even more difficult for municipalities to deal with (Abramsson et al 2002, 445).

Sweden’s lauded equality and integration legislation is best understood as a mask that hides deeply racialized, unfair employment practices and serves as a rhetorical buffer for divisive neoliberal reforms. The actors have changed, as the private sector has taken on a stronger role in development, but underlying assumptions of Swedish ‘sameness’ prevent the needs-based policy approach that is desperately needed to combat segregation and exclusion.
Chapter 7- Conclusion: Segregation as a Political Process

“Planners have not yet sufficiently analyzed their own role in an ever-present yet invisible cultural politics of difference, a historic role that has reinforced the power of the dominant culture as well as the dominant class.” (Sandercock 2003, 129)

Stockholm has, over the past 20 years, become one of Europe’s most racially segregated cities. This segregation is not only spatial- Sweden’s deeply racialized labour and housing markets are strong indicators that something is very wrong with the way that the country deals with physical difference. Despite recent demographic changes, the significance of race and the processes behind racial discrimination are not new developments in Sweden. The country’s history of scientific racism and sterilization processes that targeted minorities are inextricably linked with the folkhemmet ideal and the construction of the Swedish nation-state. Sweden’s “nativist obsession” from these earlier years remains, crouched in nationalist discourses and vilifications of the immigrant ‘Other’ (Schierup et al 2014, 1; Andersson & Molina 2003, 264). Segregation in Stockholm must be understood as an extension of this: as a political process that intersects with racism, marginalization, and exclusion at a variety of scales.

Stockholm needs more housing if the city’s infrastructure is to catch up with its explosive population growth any time soon. However, the region’s housing shortage does not affect everyone equally, and the types of solutions currently being deployed implicitly favour the lifestyles and income levels of white, middle-class Swedes, even in neighbourhoods like Alby. Stockholm’s uneven development has the greatest impact on its poorest residents: the families in Alby or Fittja who are unable to afford rents on the second-hand market and lack the financial security to invest in private apartments. The difficulty that many non-white Swedes face on the labour market compounds this problem, excluding them from the apparent economic momentum that Stockholm is gathering. This is not a malicious attempt by planners to exclude ethnic outsiders; rather, it is a norm that hangs over from Sweden’s past, an assumption that tends to blur ‘equality’ and ‘sameness’ together. There is, in other words, “power blindness” within these practices, as there is little attention given to who is served by planning policy (Richardson 1996, 279). This discursive denial of difference only serves to justify discriminatory practices because they cannot be understood and challenged properly.

At present, private investment and plans that emphasize ‘attractiveness’ alongside ‘mixed development’ are deployed as panaceas for Stockholm’s complex urban inequities. As I have shown, this process connects with the conceptual approaches put forth by Philippe Bourgois and Loïc Wacquant, who each detail the link between neoliberalization, racialization, and segregation. Recent reforms in Sweden have made this link very clear, something that has also been noted by Swedish researchers such as John Östh, Roger Andersson, Jon Loit, and Brett Christophers.

There are more topics and further research on segregation in Stockholm that would be fascinating and important to explore. Homelessness, for instance, is a critically underexplored problem in Sweden, and housing instability correlates strongly with foreign-born populations. In 2011, the last time homelessness in Sweden was officially mapped, data
showed that homelessness had “increased in all situations” when compared with data from 2005 (Socialstyrelsen, 2012). The largest increase concerned those in housing solutions provided by social services in municipalities, reflecting the acute housing shortage within Sweden’s major cities. Within these figures was a “[marked] over-representation” of people born outside Sweden (Socialstyrelsen, 2012).

Sweden has never quite been the open, egalitarian state that its international image suggests. However, the current mix of ideologies that characterize modern Swedish public policy has created a contradictory, lumbering mutation of a state. Strong neoliberal reforms have collided with socialist aspirations, and the myth of the ‘homogenous’ Swedish nation grates against shallow government promotions of multiculturalism. Stockholm is, increasingly, a bizarre union of two very different urban realities. It is at once the popular domain of wealthy, homeowning white Swedes and the overlooked site of frustration and malaise for many racial minorities who live at the city’s social and geographical margins. Through the denial of racial disadvantage, the absorption of neoliberal norms, and the discursive construction of ‘sameness’, segregationist practices and policies have been legitimized in Stockholm.

There is a trend of ethnonationalism, conformity, and protectionism that runs through Swedish policy, ensuring ‘equality’ as long as white Swedes maintain the core positions of power and market access. By unreflectively claiming ‘neutrality’ and ‘post-racialism’, Sweden risks “feeding the beast” of racial nativism and vitriolic xenophobia (Hellström & Hervik 2014, 449). There is remarkable inertia against implementing truly progressive policy measures that could work to improve outcomes for marginalized groups. The implications for Sweden are monumental: Sweden “cannot afford to waste the valuable skills embodied in immigrants and their children” (Farchy & Liebig 2014, 6). If the situation does not improve, the country may find itself harbouring segregated generations of frustrated, excluded, underemployed minorities. If Sweden’s policies and public discourses fail to take the concerns of these populations into account, continuing to treat them as racial and cultural Others while peeling back the social responsibilities of the public sector, greater urban unrest is likely. Racial disadvantage is thus “imprinted” upon Stockholm’s remarkably fractured urban space (Vaughn 2007, 211), and its segregation can be understood as a confluence of discursively constructed political norms and embedded economic operations. The racialized consequences of policies, discourses, and physical movements reinforce each other, leaving little room for the empowerment of Stockholm’s many minorities.
Chapter 8 - Policy Recommendations

To evoke John Rawls, there is a need to understand justice (and by extension equality) as concepts that only gain coherence once we recognize that “initial [situations are] not fair” (Rawls 1971, 655). Chance and disadvantage are inescapable fixtures of society, and a policy framework which does not take this into account is doomed to fail certain populations. Sweden’s present approach to redistribution involves an ideal balance of high taxation and high employment, alongside the assumption that access to public services and social networks is equal across the population. This is, as I have shown, not functioning properly in practice. As access to both housing and employment is deeply racially stratified, it is my view that there need to be more overtly needs-based redistribution measures in regards to job and home access.

Affirmative action for racial minorities is, at present, a topic that is virtually never considered in Swedish policy. The closest example Sweden has is Uppsala’s 2003 attempt at a quota system, and it has not been repeated since. In this sense, Sweden’s lauded equality laws are actually a hindrance to achieving equal outcomes for its residents, as they prevent quota systems that could give racial minorities a direct path into the workforce, improving representation and outcomes where they are desperately needed.

Affirmative action (AA) is a controversial practice at the best of times, but there are a multitude of positive outcomes that can be seen in the USA. Miller & Segal (2008, 1), writing on the use of affirmative action in American law enforcement agencies, found that “AA plans increase black employment from all ranks of police, averaging between 4.5 and 6.2 percentage points over and above any prevailing trends in the country”. More significantly, they find “no erosion of black employment gains from AA in the decade and a half following AA termination” (Miller & Segal, 1). Drawing from a broader study of corporate affirmative action data, Kalev et al (2006, 610) argue that AA programs “help… African Americans to climb into the ranks of management”. More generally, the authors contend that “structures that embed accountability, authority, and expertise [including affirmative action plans, diversity committees and taskforces, and diversity managers and departments]” are effective at increasing proportions of both black women and black men in private sector management (Kalev et al 2006, 611).

The effect on university admissions has been even more dramatic, allowing generations of minorities the opportunity to participate in American academia, even if individual test scores for these applicants are less than optimal (Sander 2004, 403; Tienda et al 2003, 42). Tienda et al (2003, ii), reflecting on common critiques of university AA, conclude that “[other admissions policies] are NOT an alternative to race sensitive admissions”, and note that “in the absence of [AA]... [other] policies will not diversify campuses of selective universities”. Moreover, affirmative action in its various forms has often been credited with aiding the creation of an African-American middle class in the USA (Pattillo 2005, 323). Whether some of these successes could be replicated in Sweden is a very different issue, but affirmative action has been shown to be a generally positive force for creating more diverse, representative workplaces and universities in the United States.

Åslund et al (2014, 405) suggest, along similar lines, that “manager origin” is a critical factor in determining who gets hired for particular positions in Sweden. Andersson and Wadensjo
(2007, 21) concur on this, showing that Sweden’s self-employed workplaces are “highly segregated” in part because “a majority of the employees originate from the same region or country” as their employer does. The trend is strongest, by far, when it comes to self-employed native Swedes employing other native Swedes. This is evidence that affirmative action policies could make a particularly strong difference in Sweden, as they force employers to break these sorts of discriminatory hiring practices. The more diverse, representative workplaces that Sweden has, the better chance there is of reversing present economic inequalities and creating a functioning minority middle class.

This lack of minority representation is an especially significant problem in the public sector, where critical decisions regarding national development are made (Kroes, fieldnotes 14/4/2015). Racial minorities (particularly those who are refugees) are very often stigmatized, victimized, and excluded- but almost never empowered. Instead of being ‘issues’ to plan around, I maintain that the better course of action is to work to make racial minorities more pronounced and more legitimate within Stockholm’s sociospatial fabric. This is doable, if not exactly politically expedient.

A stronger minority middle class in Sweden would mean, in all likelihood, less segregated cities. Because of how lopsided Stockholm’s housing market has become, it has been virtually impossible for low-income, non-white residents to either purchase their own homes or move to more prosperous areas of the city. Without access to bank loans and stable employment, Stockholm’s racial minorities have traditionally fallen through the gaps of the property market. Making these groups more prosperous means a possibility to break that cycle, allowing for actual choice and social mobility. Brämå & Andersson (2010, 331), while exploring housing trends in Uppsala, concede this point- they note that “a high income and a stable position in the labour market seem to be crucial in order to advance in the housing market”.

Sweden’s recent approach to subsidiarity – in this case, devolving as much as possible to the municipal level – has been inadequate for addressing segregation. What is needed is a stronger role for the state, as well as more room given for multi-level governance and cooperation. Vertical multi-level governance remains weak in Sweden, as the municipal level dominates planning and the regional level has no authority to make binding policies (McCallion 2007, 335). As I have shown in Alby’s case, the current system places high pressure on municipalities to solve a myriad of complex issues while giving them insufficient top-down financial support to adequately do so. With more state funding provided for public housing development throughout Stockholm, the current housing shortage could be mitigated in a way that does not overtly exclude poor racial minorities. Moreover, popular conceptions of segregation as a localized, physical problem are a hindrance to addressing structural inequalities and understanding the needs of marginalized locals. Understanding segregation as a problem that intersects with regional, national, and even European trends is essential.

13 Share of employed ethnic Swedes under other self-employed ethnic Swedes: 89% (Andersson and Wadensjo 24, 2007).
Rent control policies, while well-established in Sweden, have altered considerably since 2011. Evidence that rent control can directly counteract segregation is thin. Glaeser (2003), for example, adamantly argues that rent control is often a barrier for integration, but the assumptions behind his argument (and the examples he chooses) do not necessarily hold much weight in the present context of Stockholm. This is because Stockholm has managed to provide a particularly toxic mix of rental policies, where private first-hand contracts are (loosely) controlled but second-hand contracts are unregulated and often offered at abusive prices. For many poor residents, it is only in the strongly controlled public market that affordable housing is available. Rent control, in my view, is useful insofar as it can be a mechanism for providing poor residents with access to affordable housing and preventing egregious instances of gentrification. In Stockholm’s present case, I feel rent control still has an important role to play, at least until the worst of the city’s housing shortage can be abated. A movement towards needs-based housing allocation could also help in this regard. For example, Andersen et al (2013, 1), comparing housing regimes across the Nordic states, conclude that Finland provides the best housing outcomes for immigrants and low-income groups in part due to its “strict needs test for social/public housing”. Sweden’s ‘integrated’ approach to housing, which eschews needs-based social housing, has not prevented the country from developing the most racially segregated and economically stratified housing market in northern Europe (Andersen et al 2013, 17; 31).

Stockholm’s racial segregation may be dramatic, but it is not insurmountable. There are Swedish policy responses to segregation that can account for racial inequalities. Implementing needs-based quota policies, for instance, would be a relatively quick way to improve access for racial minorities in a number of ways, combating the deep disadvantages burgeoning within Sweden’s urban spaces. Nonetheless, Sweden is not alone in its struggle to accommodate difference, and researchers must view European debates on the issue with a keen eye for understanding the enduring significance of racial discourse.
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### Appendix

#### List of Interviews (Group 1)

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\(^{14}\) I met with Clara, Mats, Tina, and Hans to discuss my potential for working alongside the ‘Interethnic Coexistence in European Cites’ project (ICEC). This never quite came to fruition, although we were able to share findings and ideas during a group meeting at KTH.
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