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STORIES FROM SIRIUSGATAN

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Master's thesis in architecture

Architecture and Planning Beyond
Sustainability, MSc Programme
Profile: Society, Justice, Space

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ABSTRACT

Through plans, sections, perspective drawings, and material specifications, architecture can make spatial change appear clear, ordered, and possible to act upon. Yet some of the most decisive forces shaping spatial transformation take place elsewhere: in financial calculations, institutional decisions, legal procedures, negotiations, unequal relations, and everyday life. These processes often remain outside the frame of conventional architectural representation.

This thesis explores architectural graphic storytelling as a method for making such processes readable, through the empirical case of a municipal housing renovation process at Siriusgatan in Bergsjön, Gothenburg. There, a planned renovation of bathrooms and building systems became a contested process in which technical maintenance, standard-raising measures, rent increases, affordability, tenant influence, legal authority, and the possibility of remaining in place were drawn into the same multi-layered force field.

The study is based on interviews, legal documents, organisational material, technical renovation documents, media sources, and site observations. Through the analysis, empirical material is organised into analytical themes, mapped across space and time, and developed into six key tensions. These tensions structure an architectural graphic novel that traces the renovation process through actors, spaces, decisions, conflicts, and lived consequences.

The graphic novel does not aim to provide a complete or neutral account of Siriusgatan. Rather, it offers a situated and empirically grounded narrative that explores how storytelling can support recognition, make unequal positions visible, and create conditions for dialogue. In this way, the thesis positions architectural graphic storytelling not as a final layer of communication, but as a method for knowledge-making in contested spatial processes.

Key words: architectural storytelling / housing renovation / municipal housing / Million Programme / tenant contestation / spatial justice

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PROLOGUE

“

Once Lefebvre has said it—(social) space is a (social) product—one can never again see the world as a place set apart, or reduce architecture to a set of abstract forms. One has to stand and face this spatial force field, to be buffeted by winds that come from every which way. There is a feeling of exposure out there, which makes retreat to the sanctuary of the architectural drawing, and its suggestion of spatial control, all too understandable. But this, as should now be apparent, is a false sanctuary. Best then, as an architect, to get out there, to stare one's own fragility in the face. To be human. Remember who you were before you were branded an architect. Remember that you too inhabit this world. Remember that you too use buildings, occupy space. And remember that users, you included, are more than abstractions or ideals; they are imperfect, multiple, political, and all the better for it.

— Till, 2009, p. 126

This quote gathers many of the thoughts and reflections that have followed me throughout the last years of my architectural education. It speaks to a shift in how I have come to understand architecture: not as something set apart from the world, but as something deeply dependent on it.

With this mindset as a starting point, I wanted to use this final opportunity within the relatively safe space of the university to resist what Till describes as the “visual noise” of architecture's internal systems—the noise that can prevent architects from hearing the

external world (Till, 2009, pp. 87–88). Instead of allowing abstraction, visual coherence or what simply looks good to steer this thesis, I wanted to begin from the realities already out there: from people, regulations, economic pressures, institutional procedures, everyday vulnerabilities, and contested decisions.

In this sense, the thesis is not an attempt to retreat into architectural control, but to stay with the force field itself—where design does not become a solution, but a way of listening and giving form to what is already unfolding.

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01

CONTEXT & DISCOURSE

This chapter situates the thesis within a broader architectural and societal context. It introduces the disciplinary challenge addressed by the study, outlines the Siriusgatan case, and presents the key terms, key actors, and storytelling perspectives that frame the work.

01.1 ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE

Architecture and the simplification of reality

Through drawings, models, plans, sections, and visualisations, architects organise spatial ideas and make them possible to discuss, test, and develop. These tools are central to architectural practice. Yet they also simplify reality. They frame space, select what matters, and often produce a sense of coherence, control, and visual clarity.

This simplification is not in itself a problem. All forms of representation involve selection. The problem arises when architectural representation becomes detached from the social, political, economic, and lived conditions that shape space. In such moments, architecture risks retreating into what looks coherent, convincing, or aesthetically controlled, while the forces that actually produce space remain outside the frame.

From metric to social scale

Till's reading of Lefebvre is important here. Lefebvre's statement that "(social) space is a (social) product" challenges any understanding of space as abstract, neutral, or separate from social content (Lefebvre, 1991, as

cited in Till, 2009, p. 125). For Till, this means that architecture must acknowledge the "multiple and conflicting force fields" that affect spatial production, of which architectural practice is only one small part (Till, 2009, p. 126). Questions of space are therefore also questions of politics, responsibility, and everyday life.

Till also criticises the comfort of architectural abstraction. He argues that conventional architectural scales can create a semblance of reality while avoiding the mess and uncertainty of actual inhabitation. The scale of 1:100, for example, can be understood not only as a metric scale, but as a social scale: one architect to one hundred citizens. Till extends this shift across other scales. At 1:1—the scale often associated with technical detail and material precision—the drawing also enters the scale of the personal, the intimate, and the human. In this sense, 1:1 is "more than just a detail". This shift reframes architectural representation as an ethical matter, asking what it means to face the many different people, perspectives, and consequences involved in spatial transformation (Till, 2009, pp. 178–179).

Visual noise and the external world

The critique is particularly relevant in relation to contested housing renovation. Architectural drawings and visualisations can show proposed spatial outcomes, but they often struggle to show the processes through which those outcomes are produced: legal procedures, financial calculations, institutional priorities, tenant resistance, and lived vulnerability. Till describes the internal systems of architecture as filled with “visual noise”, making it difficult to hear the external world (Till, 2009, pp. 87–88). In this thesis, the external world is the messy reality of a renovation process: technical, legal, economic, political, and personal at the same time.

For architectural practice, this raises questions of ethics, representation, and agency. If architecture depends on forces beyond the discipline itself, then architectural work cannot only concern the design of spatial outcomes. It must also find ways of engaging with the conditions, conflicts, and consequences through which those outcomes become possible.

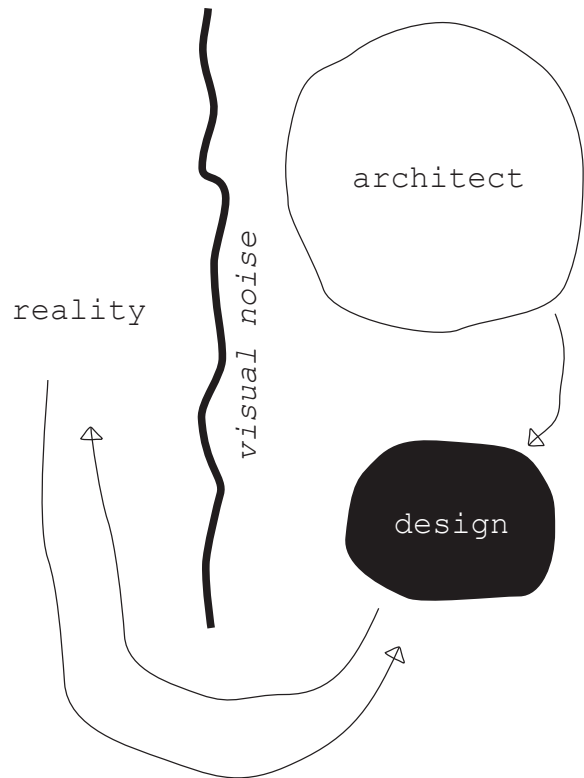


Figure 1a:
The Disciplinary Challenge
Visual noise separates architectural design from the realities it depends on.

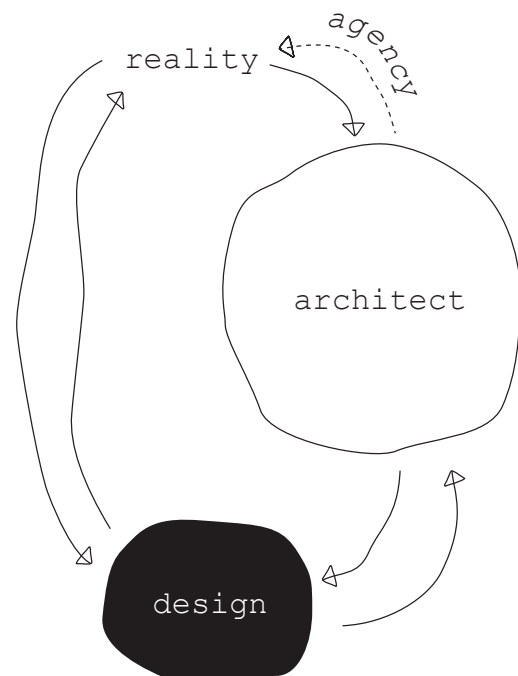


Figure 1b:
The Explored Potential
Reality, architect and design are reconnected.

01.2 SOCIETAL CONTEXT

Erosion of Sweden's public rental housing

Over the past decades, Sweden's public rental housing sector, *allmännyttan*, has been gradually reshaped by market-oriented reforms, financial interests, and changing housing policy. What was once understood as a central part of the Swedish welfare state has increasingly been drawn into market logics, where investment, competition, and profitability influence decisions about housing provision and urban development (Christophers, 2013, pp. 887–893; Hedin et al., 2012, pp. 443–446; Kadioğlu & Listerborn, 2025, pp. 5–6).

This shift has changed the role of municipal housing companies. Originally associated with the provision of good and affordable housing for broad groups of the population, these companies are now expected to operate according to business-like principles (Christophers, 2013, pp. 890–893; Thörn et al., 2023b, pp. 61–62). The result is a blurred boundary between public responsibility and market logic, where rental housing is increasingly treated as an asset within a financialised housing system rather than primarily as a social right (Hedin et al., 2012, pp. 444–446; Kadioğlu &

Listerborn, 2025, p. 7).

Market-led renewal of Million Programme areas

Large Million Programme neighbourhoods have become central arenas in this transformation. Built between 1965 and 1974 to address housing shortages and support welfare-oriented housing provision, these areas were initially associated with modern planning, social reform, and collective progress (Hall & Vidén, 2005, pp. 301–303, 324). Over time, however, many have been affected by technical decline, stigmatisation, segregation, and socio-economic inequality (Baeten et al., 2017, pp. 636–638; Hall & Vidén, 2005, pp. 313; Thörn et al., 2023b, pp. 59–61).

Today, the renovation of Million Programme housing is often presented through the language of technical necessity, energy efficiency, and long-term maintenance. At the same time, such renovation processes may involve standard-raising measures, rent increases, and displacement pressures for low-income tenants (Baeten et al., 2017, pp. 631–632, 636–638; Thörn et al., 2023a, pp. 10–12). Renovation therefore becomes more than a technical opera-

tion. It becomes a contested spatial process where questions of maintenance, affordability, tenant influence, welfare, and marketisation meet.

State-led gentrification and tenant resistance

These processes have been described as part of wider patterns of state-led gentrification and urban restructuring. Thörn and Polanska (2023, pp. 212–213, 226–228) describe renovation governance as a process of responsabilisation, where responsibility is shifted across macro, meso, and micro levels: from the state to municipal housing companies, intermediary actors, consultation groups, and ultimately individual tenants. Renovation of Million Programme housing has therefore become a key field of struggle in contemporary Swedish housing politics.

Within this context, tenant resistance has become increasingly visible. Tenants affected by renovation and rent increases often describe uncertainty, stress, and emotional strain connected to the risk of not being able to remain in their homes (Polanska & Richard, 2018, pp. 423–425). In several cases, tenants have organised collectively to demand participation, affordability, and the right to stay (Polanska & Richard, 2018, pp. 427–429; Thörn et al., 2023b, p. 63). However, legal and institutional processes of-

ten place tenants in unequal positions in relation to landlords. Baeten et al. (2017, pp. 642–643, 647) show that rent tribunal processes often place tenants in a weak position in renovation disputes, especially where technical necessity and the scope of renovation are assessed largely through the landlord's account.

Renovation as a contested spatial practice

For this thesis, municipal housing renovation is understood as a socially, legally, economically, and spatially contested practice. It is not only a matter of improving buildings, but of transforming the conditions of everyday life. Decisions about bathroom pipes, facades, courtyards, rent levels, and tenant consent are connected to broader systems of housing governance, property economy, and legal regulation. This makes renovation a particularly relevant context for exploring how architectural representation might engage with complex realities that are difficult to capture through conventional drawings alone.

01.3 THE CASE: SIRIUSGATAN



Figure 2:
Housing Block at Siriusgatan

A Million Programme housing area

Siriusgatan is a large-scale housing area in Bergsjön in north-eastern Gothenburg, built during the early 1970s as part of the Million Programme. The area comprises twelve slab blocks of seven to eight storeys and approximately 1,200 apartments (Femenías et al., 2017, p. 11). It consists entirely of rental apartments owned and managed by Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, a municipal housing company within the Swedish public housing sector (*allmännyttan*, Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2020, p. 1). Like many similar neighbourhoods, Bergsjön was originally envisioned as a modern and socially in-

clusive welfare housing project. Over time, however, Siriusgatan has come to reflect both ageing building infrastructure and wider socio-economic challenges in Bergsjön, including low income levels, low employment rates, child poverty, and perceived insecurity (Femenías et al., 2017, p. 11; Förvaltnings AB Framtiden, 2020, pp. 3–4). Siriusgatan is therefore situated within both the history of welfare housing and contemporary questions of renovation, affordability, and urban inequality.

Renovation over time

The housing stock at Siriusgatan has undergone several rounds of renovation. During the early 1990s, the facades were repainted and the bathrooms partly upgraded, although the existing pipe systems were not replaced (Femenías et al., 2017, p. 11). In 2018, Familjebostäder began a more extensive renovation of the facades and outdoor environment across the area (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2020, p. 1). Parts of this exterior renovation have since been completed, followed by rent increases (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2020, p. 4; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 4–5).

More recently, Familjebostäder has begun interior renovations, particularly bathroom upgrades involving pipe replacement (*stambyte*). These measures affect approximately 140 apartments and include tiled walls and floors, the replacement of bathtubs with showers, and new heating and electrical systems (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2022, p. 4; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2023, pp. 1–2). The renovation is therefore both technical and spatial: it concerns building systems, domestic interiors, standards, rents, and everyday use.

Tenant resistance and legal process

The interior renovation plans sparked strong tenant resistance. Residents, supported by the Swedish Union of Tenants, argued that the standard-raising measures risked making their homes unaffordable (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 6–8). In December 2023, the Rent Tribunal partly supported the tenants, giving weight to the economic consequences of the proposed rent increases (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 15–16). This decision was later overturned by the Svea Court of Appeal, which granted the landlord permission to proceed, giving greater weight to technically and property-economically rational management considerations (Svea Court of

Appeal, 2024, pp. 4, 7–8).

The case therefore involves more than disagreement about design or material standards. It shows how renovation is negotiated through letters, consent forms, tenant meetings, union representation, legal arguments, and court decisions. These settings are part of the spatial process, although they are often difficult to capture through conventional architectural drawings.

Multi-dimensional conflict

The conflict at Siriusgatan illustrates how housing renovation operates across several dimensions at once. Materially, it concerns the transformation of buildings, bathrooms, and domestic space. Institutionally, it reveals how legal frameworks, municipal housing governance, and property management shape renovation processes. Socially, it exposes the lived realities for tenants: uncertainty, emotional strain, economic vulnerability, and the struggle to remain in place.

For this thesis, Siriusgatan functions as the empirical case through which conflicts, actor positions, institutional procedures, and lived consequences are translated into a situated visual narrative. In this way, Siriusgatan becomes the local context where wider societal discourse and questions of architectural representation meet.

01.4 KEY TERMS

The Million Programme

The Million Programme (*miljonprogrammet*, 1965–1974) was a national housing programme aimed at rapidly producing modern and affordable housing across Sweden.

Municipal public housing

Municipal public housing (*allmännyttan*) refers to Sweden's municipally owned housing companies, historically associated with welfare-state ideals of providing good and affordable housing for a broad population.

The Utility Value System

The Utility Value System (*bruksvärde*) is the Swedish rent-setting system in which rents are determined in relation to the standard, qualities, and use value of comparable rental apartments.

Necessary maintenance

Necessary maintenance (*underhåll*) refers to measures required to maintain the basic function and technical condition of a dwelling, which should generally not justify rent increases.

Standard-raising measures

Standard-raising measures (*standardhöjande åtgärder*) are renovation measures that increase the standard or utility value of a dwelling and may justify rent increases.

The Public Municipal Housing Companies Act

The Public Municipal Housing Companies Act (*lagen (2010:879) om allmännyttiga kommunala bostadsaktiebolag*) regulates municipal housing companies in Sweden. It requires these companies to operate according to business-like principles while also serving a public interest purpose. This creates a tension between social responsibility and market logic.

01.5 KEY ACTORS

Tenants

Residents whose apartments were included in the first phase of the interior renovation process. While a majority of the 140 households approved the proposed measures, 35 of them did not.

The Swedish Union of Tenants

The Swedish Union of Tenants (*Hysesgästföreningen*) is the national tenant organisation that represents residents in negotiations with landlords and advocates for tenants' rights. The organisation operates through national, regional and local levels, including negotiation delegations and local tenants' associations. At Siriusgatan, a local tenants' association represents residents within the area.

Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB

Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB is the municipal housing company that owns and manages the rental apartments at Siriusgatan and is responsible for the renovation. It is part of the city's municipal housing corporation structure and operates between social housing responsibilities, political owner directives, and financial property management requirements.

City of Gothenburg

The City of Gothenburg (*Göteborgs Stad*) is the municipal authority responsible for local governance in Gothenburg, including the broader housing policy context. Through its municipal corporate structure, the city acts as the political owner of public housing companies and shapes the conditions under which they operate.

The Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg

The Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg (*Hyses- och arrendenämnden i Göteborg*) is the quasi-judicial body that assesses disputes between tenants and landlords, including renovation measures and tenant approvals. In this thesis it is also referred to as the Rent Tribunal or simply the tribunal.

Svea Court of Appeal

The Svea Court of Appeal (*Svea hovrätt*) is the appellate court that reviews judgments and decisions from lower instances, including tenancy-related cases. It functions as the final instance in appeals concerning decisions from the Rent and Tenancy Tribunal.

01.6 ARCHITECTURAL STORYTELLING

Storytelling beyond fiction

Against this background, architectural graphic storytelling is introduced as a way of engaging with situated realities rather than as fictional speculation or a final communicative layer added after analysis. It is understood as a critical architectural practice that can organise complex situations, hold together different perspectives, and make conflicts, roles, experiences, and consequences readable.

Doucet argues that storytelling is central to architecture, since architects continuously tell stories when imagining and communicating futures. Such stories may confirm existing conditions, but they may also operate critically and open possibilities for change (Doucet, 2022, p. 40). Here, storytelling is used to stay close to an existing renovation process without reducing it to one single account.

Situated stories and multiple actors

Doucet's discussion of situated storytelling is particularly important for this thesis. She argues that stories can help situations be evaluated in a "more complex, entangled, and situ-

ated manner" and resist generalising accounts by drawing attention to the particular details, actors, and stakes that shape a specific situation (Doucet, 2022, p. 40).

This is directly relevant to the Siriusgatan case. The renovation process is not only technical or experiential; it is composed through the relations between these dimensions. Architectural graphic storytelling offers a way to hold such dimensions together without forcing them into one simplified explanation.

Staying with mess and conflict

Doucet also warns that architectural stories are not always allowed to show traces of "messy world-making and struggle". In competitions, tenders, and client presentations, such messiness may appear counterproductive, and stories therefore risk becoming overly clean, persuasive, or coherent projections (Doucet, 2022, pp. 44–45). Here, the aim is not to smooth the renovation process into a harmonious narrative, but to keep its conflicts and frictions visible.

This connects to Till's argument that architecture must engage with the realities on which it depends. He ar-

gues that social ethics are inherent in design, even when ignored, and that architectural practice inevitably operates within an arena of conflicting demands (Till, 2009, pp. 182–183). Rather than seeking ethical positions outside the everyday world, Till argues for an ethics that works from within each situation, where diverse points of view can only be negotiated “as best a manner as possible” rather than resolved perfectly (Till, 2009, pp. 185–186).

In this sense, storytelling becomes a way of staying with mess rather than removing it. For Siriusgatan, it is useful not because it simplifies reality, but because it can make complexity possible to follow.

Stories that help us notice

A further reason for turning to storytelling is its capacity to direct attention. Doucet draws on Swanson, Tsing, Bubandt, and Gan’s formulation that “some kinds of stories help us notice; others get in the way” (Doucet, 2022, p. 46). The question is therefore not only whether a situation can be told as a story, but what kind of story makes certain relations, conflicts, and consequences visible—and what kind might obscure them.

Doucet also emphasises the importance of being attentive to hidden mechanisms of power, bias, and pref-

erence in the stories and counterstories we produce (Doucet, 2022, p. 46). This is particularly relevant when storytelling is based on real actors, contested processes, and unequal positions.

Storytelling as knowledge-making and dialogue

Architectural graphic storytelling is therefore understood as a form of knowledge-making. It offers a way to connect architectural representation with situated social, legal, economic, and lived realities. Rather than presenting space as a fixed outcome, storytelling can show how spatial situations are shaped through actors, decisions, conflicts, documents, experiences, and consequences.

This dialogue-oriented potential does not mean that storytelling resolves conflict or automatically produces change. Rather, it may create conditions for recognition, reflection, and dialogue. In this sense, storytelling is explored as a way of making contested renovation processes understandable enough to be questioned, discussed, and potentially reimaged.

02

THE STUDY

This chapter defines the study. It presents the research questions, aim, delimitations, and contribution.

02 . 1 **RESEARCH QUESTION**

Research question

Using the renovation process at Siriusgatan as a case, this thesis asks:

How can architectural graphic storytelling expand architectural representation by supporting knowledge-making and creating conditions for dialogue in municipal housing renovation processes?

Guiding methodological questions

The following questions guided the movement from empirical material to graphic narrative:

1.	2.	3.
How can empirical material from the Siriusgatan renovation process be analysed and translated into a graphic narrative structure?	How can sequencing, framing, and visual design support interpretation while keeping the narrative grounded in empirical material?	How can actors' voices, conflicts, and lived experiences be represented transparently and ethically, with attention to unequal positions within the renovation process?

02 . 2 **AIM**

Methodological aim

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how architectural graphic storytelling can expand architectural representation by producing situated knowledge about contested municipal housing renovation processes and creating conditions for recognition, reflection, and dialogue.

Case-based exploration

Through the case of Siriusgatan, the thesis examines how empirical material can be organised, sequenced, and visualised to make visible the relations, conflicts, institutional logics and lived consequences through which space is produced. It does not aim to provide a complete account of the case or to resolve the conflict, but to explore how graphic storytelling can make complex spatial processes readable, discussable, and open to critical reflection.

Dialogue-oriented ambition

Through this, the thesis explores how architectural representation can support dialogue by making contested positions, unequal conditions, and possible futures easier to recognise, question, and discuss.

02.3 DELIMITATIONS

Case and context

This thesis is delimited to the renovation process at Siriusgatan in Bergsjön, Gothenburg. The case is used as a situated empirical context for knowledge-making in municipal housing renovation processes. The thesis does not aim to provide a complete account of Swedish housing policy, the Million Programme, or Bergsjön. It focuses on the conflicts, decisions, actor positions, and lived consequences that emerge through the collected material.

Empirical material

The graphic narrative is based on selected empirical material, including legal documents, organisational documents, technical information, media material, observations, and interviews. It is a situated and composed account, and not an exhaustive or neutral representation of the process.

Scope of evaluation

The thesis does not technically, economically, or legally evaluate the renovation measures, nor does it seek to resolve the conflict between the actors involved. Instead, it explores how different positions, experiences, and

power relations can be made readable through architectural graphic storytelling.

Dialogue and application

The dialogue-oriented potential of the story is explored conceptually rather than fully tested with the involved parties. The thesis therefore does not measure the effects of the graphic narrative in practice, but examines its possible capacity to support recognition, reflection, and conditions for dialogue.

02 . 4 **CONTRIBUTION**

Positioning storytelling as method

The thesis contributes to architectural research and representation by positioning architectural graphic storytelling as an analytical method for engaging with real and contested spatial processes.

Graphic narrative as knowledge-making

Rather than treating storytelling as fictional speculation or as a final communicative layer, the thesis shows how graphic narrative can function as a form of knowledge-making. Through the case of Siriusgatan, it demonstrates how empirical material can be selected, sequenced, and re-composed into a visual narrative that makes relations between actors, decisions, documents, and spatial consequences possible to follow.

Methodological and representational contribution

The contribution is therefore both methodological and representational. Methodologically, the thesis develops a process for moving from empirical material, through analytical themes and key tensions, into narrative form.

Representationally, it expands what architectural drawing can address by bringing legal, economic, institutional, and lived dimensions into the frame of architectural representation.

Dialogue-oriented contribution

The thesis also contributes by exploring the dialogue-oriented potential of architectural storytelling. By keeping the narrative close to empirical material while structuring it around key tensions, the graphic story can support recognition, reflection, and discussion around possible futures in municipal housing renovation.

03

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological approach and research design. It explains how empirical material was collected, interpreted, and translated into an analytical and design-based process that combines qualitative inquiry with architectural representation.

03.1 **METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Architecture as inquiry and translation

This thesis is positioned within a critical and transdisciplinary research-by-design approach. It treats architecture not only as the production of spatial objects, but also as a way of investigating, organising, and translating complex realities. Architectural work is therefore understood as a mode of inquiry: a way of asking questions through drawings, sequences, spatial relations, and narrative structures. The methodology is both analytical and design-based, moving between empirical material, interpretation, and graphic narrative development.

Method as circular movement

The method is understood as a circular movement between reality, empirical material, analysis, narrative design, and dialogue. The starting point is the renovation process at Siriusgatan as a lived, technical, legal, economic and political reality. This reality is accessed through selected material, including interviews, legal documents, technical information, organisational documents, media reports, observations, and images.

In the analysis phase, the empirical material is read, organised and interpreted. Events, actions, actor positions, and conflicts are thematised and situated in relation to actors, space and time. The analysis is then translated and recomposed into an architectural graphic narrative. This step explores how sequence, framing, drawing, text and quotation can make relations, tensions, and consequences readable.

The architectural graphic narrative is understood as a potential shared object for reading, recognition, and conversation. It may allow different actors to encounter positions beyond their own, gain knowledge about the process, and discuss what the story makes visible. Dialogue does not automatically change reality, but it may create new understandings, questions, and openings for future action. While the thesis primarily focuses on the collection, analysis and design phases, the method points back towards reality by suggesting how architectural storytelling may create conditions for reflection, dialogue, and possible change.

The iterative loop

The relation between analysis and

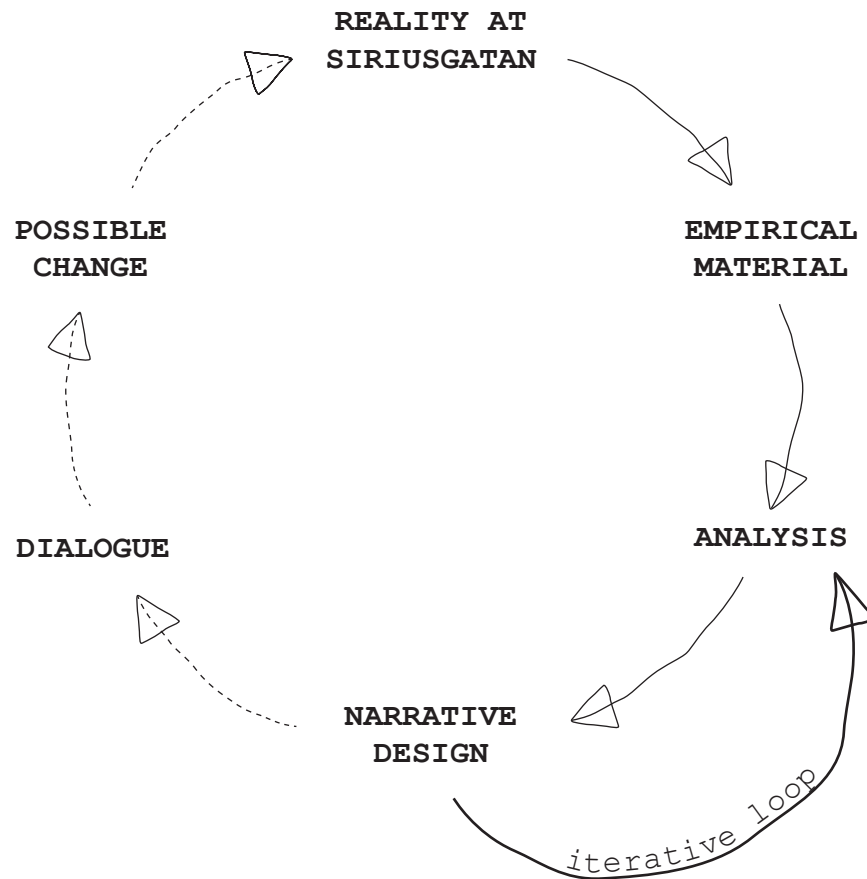


Figure 3:
Method as Circular Movement

The diagram shows the movement from reality at Siriusgatan, through empirical material, analysis, and narrative design, towards dialogue and possible change. Dashed lines mark the projected potential of the method beyond the scope of the thesis.

design was iterative rather than linear. Analytical findings were tested through narrative design iterations, including sketches of scenes, sequences, actor perspectives, quote placement, spatial transitions and relations between text and image. Through these iterations, the graphic narrative did not simply illustrate the analysis; it became a way of further organising and questioning the material.

This iterative loop was particularly important because the thesis explores architectural storytelling as a method. The design process tested how real conflicts could be translated into a readable narrative without reducing them to a single perspective or simplified conclusion. In this sense, analysis informed the story, while the making of the story also helped clarify which relations, tensions and consequences were most significant.

03.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Empirical material

The empirical material consists of semi-structured interviews, legal documents, organisational and policy documents, technical renovation documents, media articles, video material, and site observations. The interviewees are listed in anonymised form in *Appendix A: Interviewees*. The material was selected because it contained actor voices, descriptions of the renovation process, legal and institutional arguments, or accounts of lived consequences.

Media material

Media material was identified through online searches using keywords related to the case, including “Siriusgatan”, “Bergsjön”, “renovation”, “Familjebostäder”, and “Hyresgästföreningen”. Material was collected from relevant newspaper, organisational, and public websites. Since many residents’ voices derive from media sources and public material where conflict is articulated, the tenant perspectives represented in the material tend to be predominantly critical. The study therefore does not aim to provide a representative overview of all residents’ attitudes, but to analyse how positions, claims, and experiences

are articulated within the public and institutional discourse.

Empirical excerpts and analytical themes

Quotations and relevant excerpts from interviews, documents, and media sources were selected when they addressed the renovation process, actor positions, decisions, conflicts, or lived experiences. These excerpts were reviewed to identify recurring claims, concerns, arguments, and interpretations of the renovation process. Material expressing similar positions or concerns was then grouped into analytical themes. Each empirical excerpt was coded and linked to an analytical statement, so that the connection between the empirical material, the analytical themes, and the graphic narrative could be traced throughout the process. The selected empirical excerpts and their analytical coding are included in *Appendix B: Selected Empirical Excerpts*.

Spatial-Temporal mapping

The analytical themes were then mapped across spatial and temporal dimensions. This mapping positioned conflicts, decisions, and consequences across different spaces and

phases of the renovation process.

From analysis to graphic storytelling

The spatial–temporal mapping made it possible to identify six key tensions that structured the renovation process. These tensions formed the narrative basis for the graphic story and were translated into visual sequences combining quotations, actor relations, and spatial situations. The aim was not to produce a total account of the renovation process, but to make selected relations, tensions, and consequences readable through architectural graphic storytelling.

Translation and AI assistance

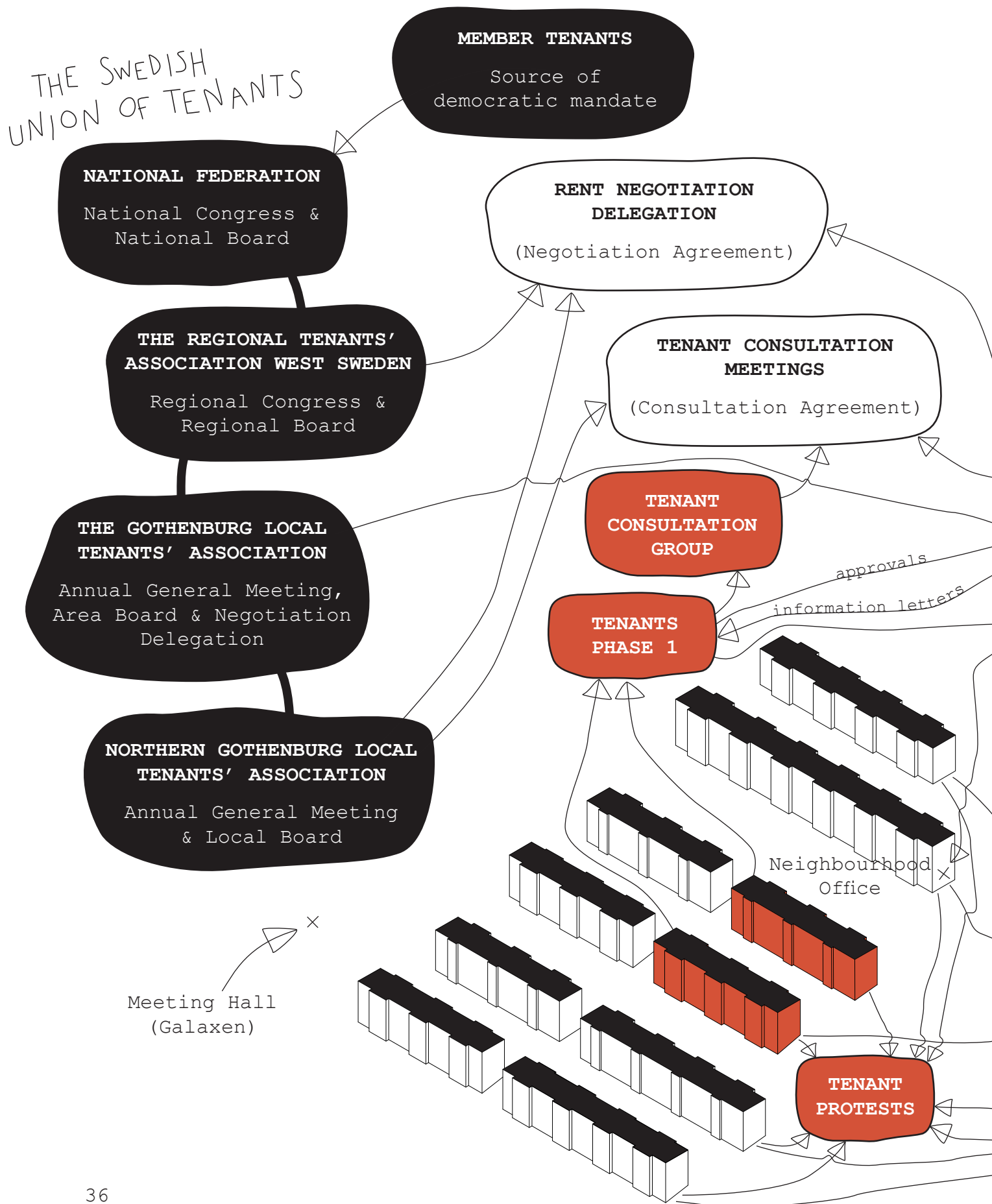
All empirical material used in the study is in Swedish. Selected quotations and source titles have been translated into English by the author. ChatGPT was used as a language-support tool to assist with translating selected quotations and source titles into English and to support the formatting of references according to APA style. The translations were reviewed and edited by the author in relation to the original Swedish material. AI assistance was used only for language and formatting support; analytical interpretation, source selection, narrative construction, and final wording remain the responsibility of the author.

04

ANALYSIS

This chapter develops the analytical basis for the graphic narrative. It first maps the actors and relations that shape the renovation process, then identifies recurring analytical themes in the empirical material. These themes are traced through spatial-temporal mapping and developed into six key tensions. The selected empirical excerpts, their coding, and the analytical themes are included in *Appendix B: Selected Empirical Excerpts*, making the connection between empirical material and analysis traceable. Together, these analytical steps show how the renovation process is structured by overlapping technical, legal, economic, institutional, and lived dimensions.

04.1 ACTOR RELATIONS



MUNICIPAL HOUSING ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

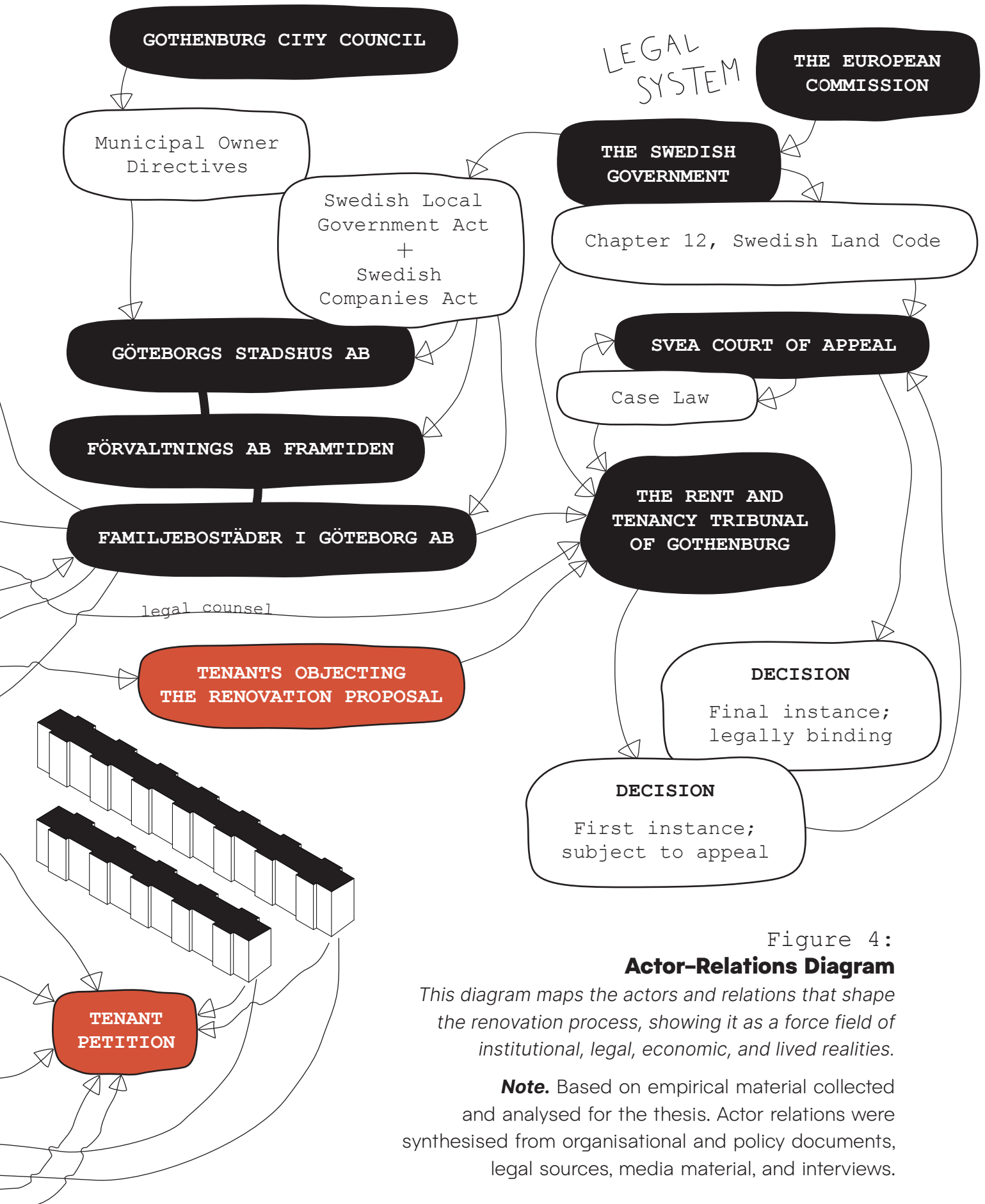


Figure 4:
Actor-Relations Diagram

This diagram maps the actors and relations that shape the renovation process, showing it as a force field of institutional, legal, economic, and lived realities.

Note. Based on empirical material collected and analysed for the thesis. Actor relations were synthesised from organisational and policy documents, legal sources, media material, and interviews.

04.2 ANALYTICAL THEMES

Rent increases are described as financially unsustainable in relation to already strained household economies. (TE 1)

Rent increases are repeatedly linked to the risk of displacement, including downsizing, overcrowding, or forced relocation. (TE 2)

The home is described as a last point of stability, and renovation-induced rent increases transform it into a condition of insecurity. (TE 3)

What is defined institutionally as improvement is often experienced by tenants as unnecessary, inappropriate, or even as a reduction of usability. (TE 5)

Tenants distinguish between necessary maintenance and rent-generating standard increases, accepting the former but contesting the latter. (TE 4)

Consultation processes are experienced as one-directional information rather than genuine dialogue or influence. (TE 6)

Sequential and overlapping rent increases create cumulative financial pressure and a sense of being misled. (TE 7)

Tenants remain not because of neighbourhood quality, but because rent levels still make living possible. (TE 8)

Housing costs directly affect tenants' ability to meet basic everyday needs such as food, transport, and clothing. (TE 9)



Tenants

Renovation is framed as a technical necessity due to ageing infrastructure and material conditions. (LA1)

Standard-raising renovation is financially structured around rent increases, without which the project becomes unviable. (LA3)

Fully tiled bathrooms are presented as the only rational, durable, and professionally accepted solution. (LA2)

Renovation decisions are shaped by asset valuation, return requirements, and the avoidance of financial write-downs. (LA4)

Uniform standardisation is framed as a matter of equality, attractiveness, and consistency across the housing stock. (LA5)

Renovation is positioned as a tool for broader area development, social regulation, and territorial transformation. (LA6)

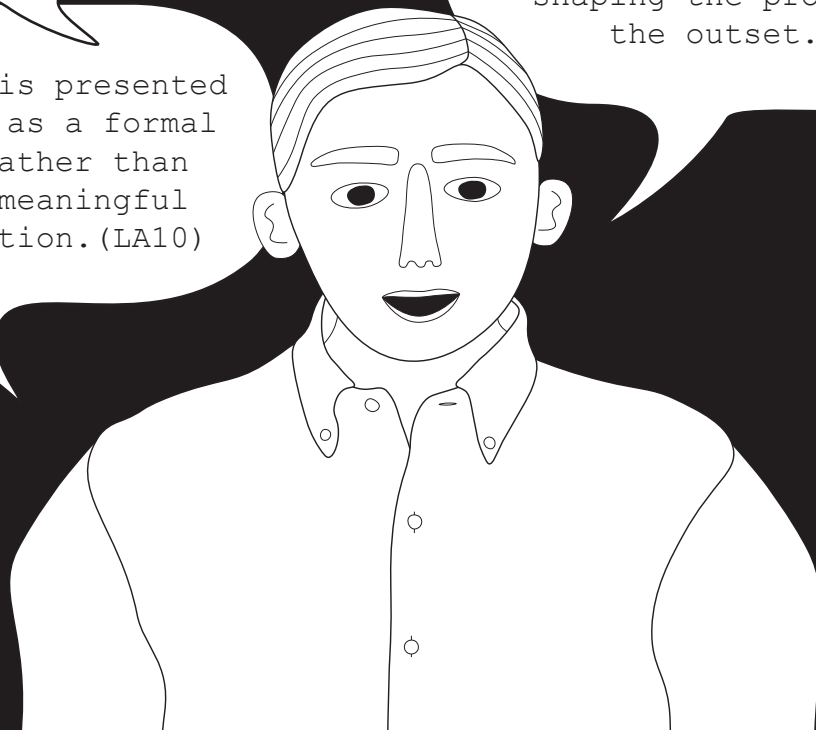
Project design is constrained by public procurement procedures, internal approval processes, and interdependent decision chains. (LA7)

Tenant hardship is recognised but addressed through phased rent increases rather than reduced intervention. (LA8)

Communication shortcomings are acknowledged after conflict emerges rather than shaping the project from the outset. (LA9)

Tenant approval is presented by the landlord as a formal requirement, rather than as a stage of meaningful project negotiation. (LA10)

Landlord



Collective organisation and visible mobilisation enable tenants to exert influence in the renovation process. (TU1)

Formal tenant influence rights only become effective when they are actively translated, organised, and made accessible. (TU2)

Participation is constrained by fear, pressure from landlords, and limited understanding of legal processes. (TU3)

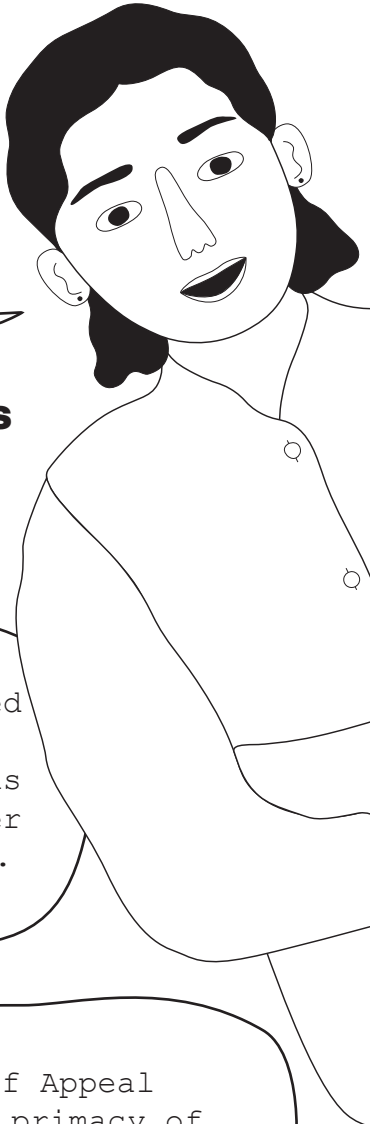
The legal separation between renovation approval and rent setting makes affordability difficult to articulate and defend. (TU4)

Conflict intensifies when new renovation measures are introduced on top of already ongoing rent increases. (TU5)

Affordability pressure is described as forcing tenants to imagine or resort to harmful survival strategies beyond the housing sphere. (TU6)

Extended legal processes reduce visible mobilisation while prolonging uncertainty and insecurity. (TU7)





Political actors present themselves as responsible for overall direction while distancing themselves from the concrete operational decisions that produce tenant conflict. (P01)

Politicians

The legal framework positions the landlord as the primary authority in technical and economic decision-making. (LE1)

Affordability is recognised as a relevant tenant interest, but is treated as one factor within a broader legal balancing framework. (LE2)

The tribunal gives priority to tenant affordability and vulnerability over standardised upgrading. (LE3)

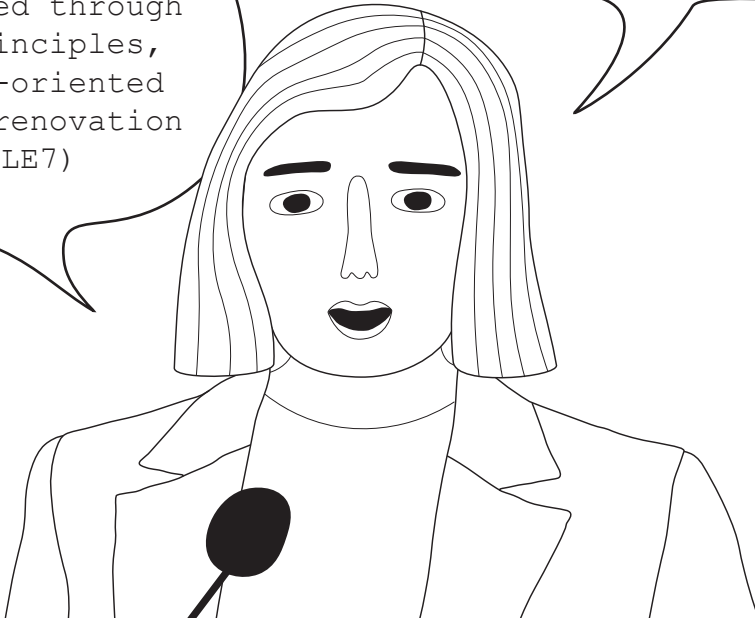
The Court of Appeal reasserts the primacy of technical and property-economic rationality. (LE4)

The legal process reveals contradictions between formal consultation rights and predetermined project logic. (LE5)

Claims of technical necessity are not neutral but contested within the legal process. (LE6)

Municipal housing is legally structured through businesslike principles, allowing market-oriented logics to shape renovation decisions. (LE7)

Legal System



04.3 SPATIAL-TEMPORAL MAPPING

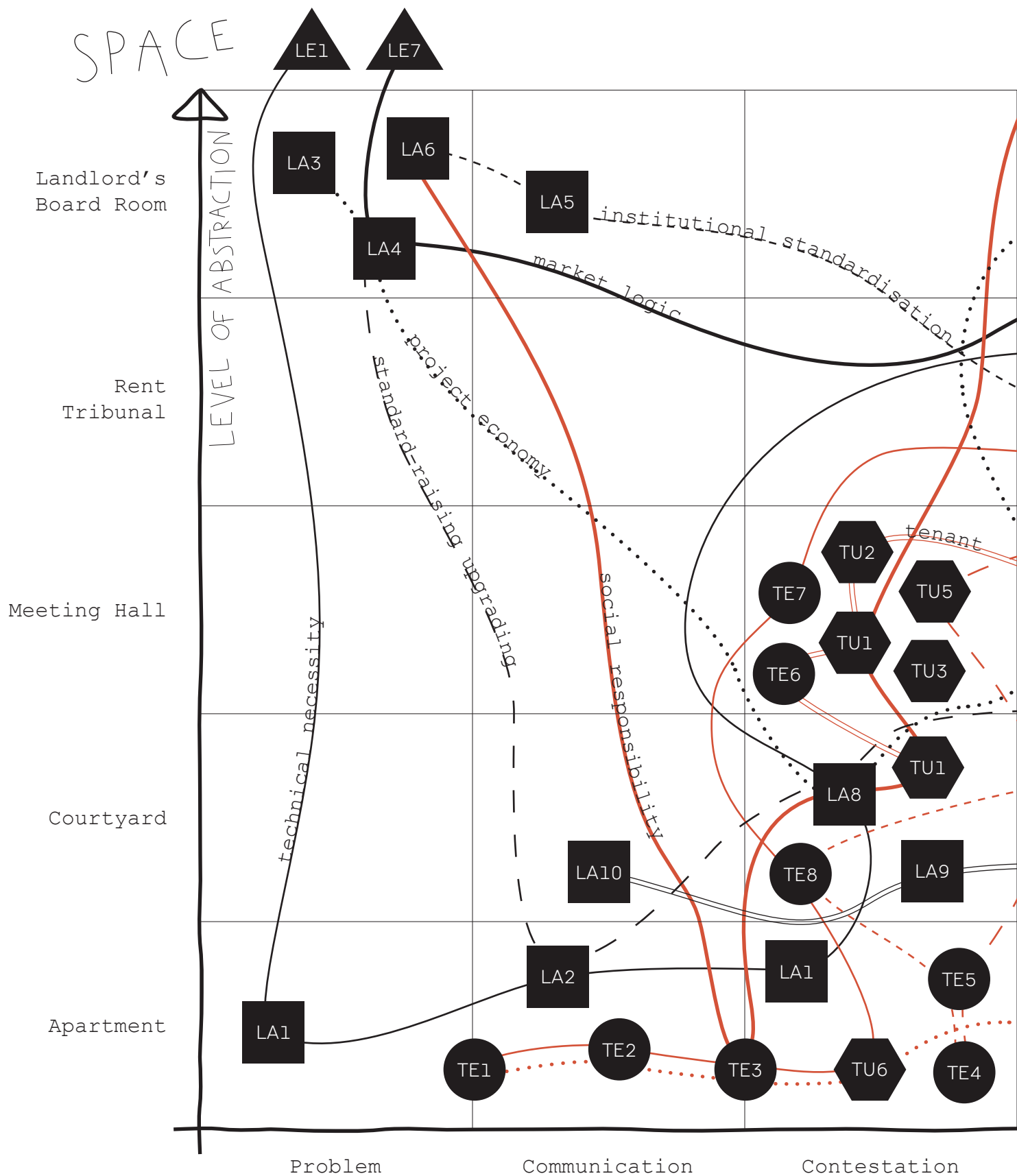
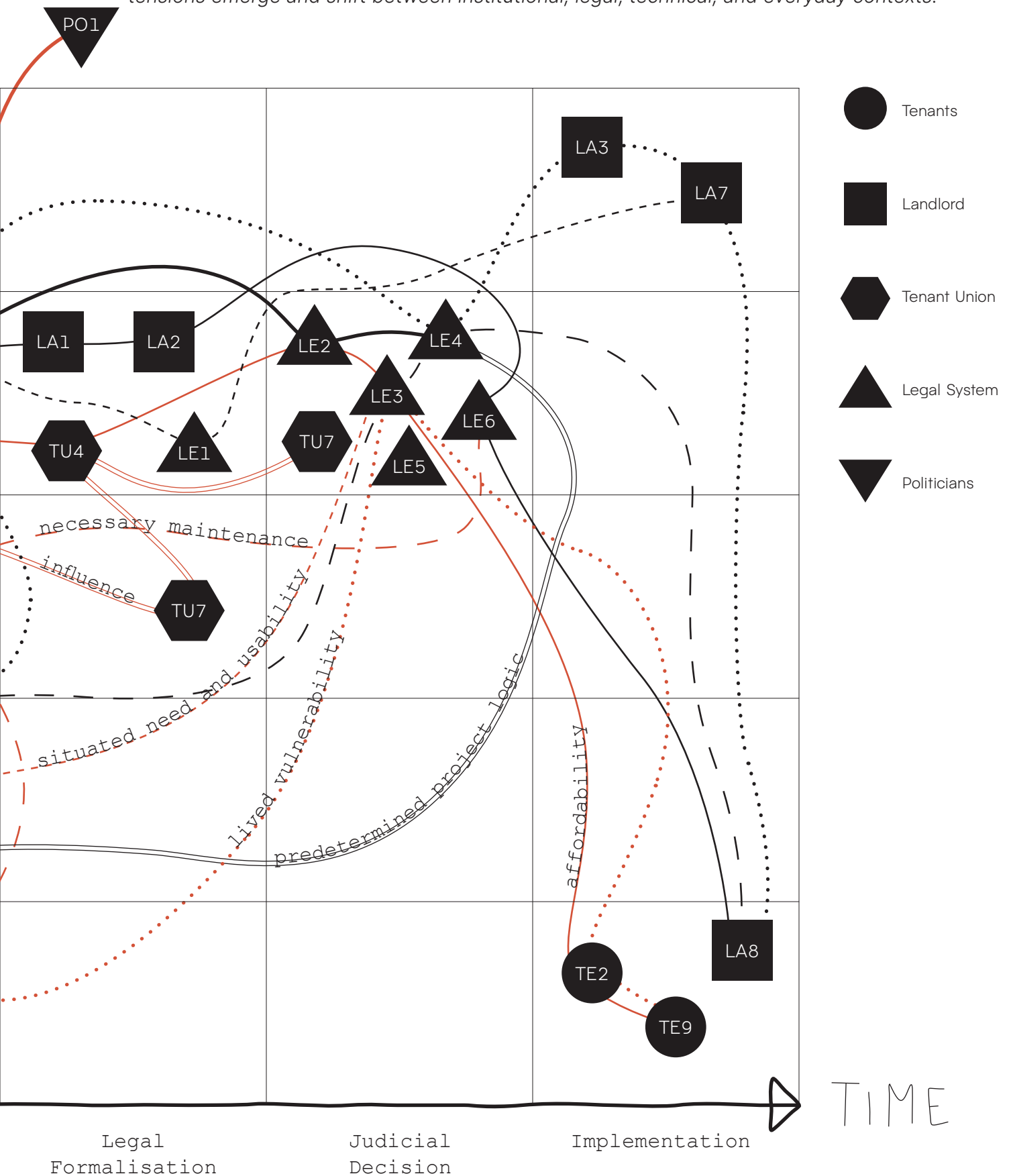


Figure 5:
Spatial-Temporal Matrix

This matrix traces the renovation process across spaces and time, showing how key tensions emerge and shift between institutional, legal, technical, and everyday contexts.



04 . 4 **KEY TENSIONS**

The spatial-temporal mapping made it possible to trace how recurring analytical themes move across different spaces, stages, and levels of abstraction in the renovation process. Rather than remaining fixed within one actor position or one moment in time, the themes shift between technical descriptions, legal procedures, organisational documents, consultation settings, media accounts, and lived experiences.

Through this tracing, certain tensions become visible as structuring conflicts in the material. They are not identified as isolated disagreements, but as recurring oppositions that appear across the process in different forms. A technical need for renovation, for example, becomes connected to questions of affordability. Maintenance becomes difficult to separate from standard-raising upgrading. Formal tenant influence becomes entangled with a project logic that was already largely defined. Lived vulnerability meets project economy, situated needs meet institutional standardisation, and social responsibility meets market logic.

These tensions form the analytical bridge between the empirical material and the narrative construction

of the graphic novel. Each tension brings together tenant-related and landlord-related positions, not in order to reduce the conflict to two separate sides, but to show how different realities are produced through the same renovation process.

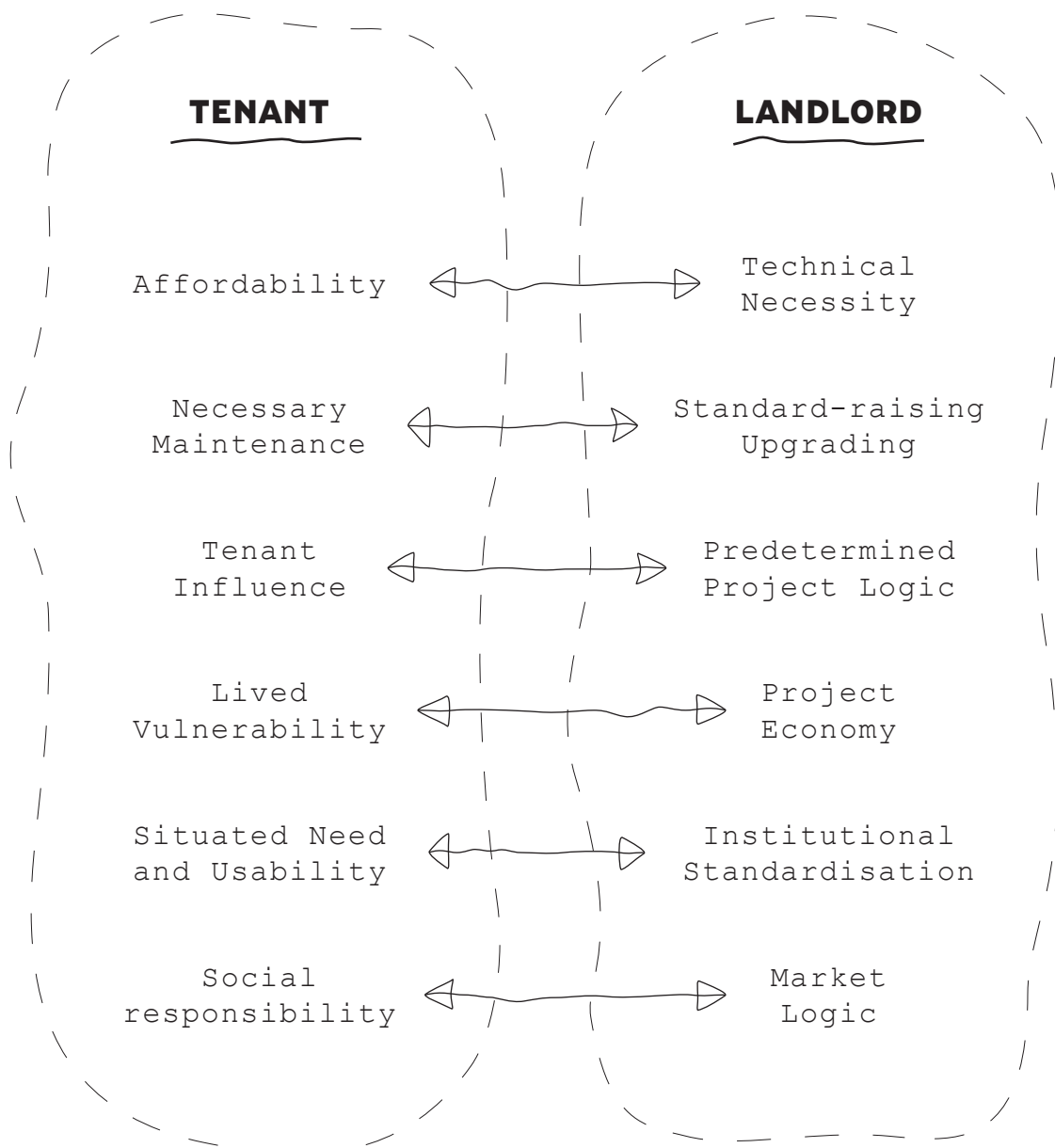


Figure 6:
KEY TENSIONS MAPPING
The diagram shows how the six key tensions are structured between tenant-related and landlord-related positions.

05

DESIGNING THE NARRATIVE

This chapter shows how the analytical findings were translated into narrative form. It introduces the design principles, iterative tests, and narrative decisions that shaped the architectural graphic novel. The focus is on how key tensions, quotations, spatial settings, and visual sequencing were brought together into a readable graphic narrative.

05.1 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Introduction

The design principles were developed through an iterative process between empirical analysis and narrative design. Rather than functioning as predetermined rules, they emerged through repeated tests of how the material could be sequenced, framed, visualised and voiced. They therefore reflect both analytical concerns, such as transparency, conflict, and situatedness, as well as design concerns, such as readability, rhythm, and visual restraint.

Image & visuals

The visual language is kept black and white to support neutrality, readability, and focus. The images are not intended to dominate the narrative, but to guide it. The drawing style remains abstract enough to avoid presenting the images as direct evidence, while still being detailed enough to support the specific content of each frame—whether it concerns personal experience, technical detail, organisational structure or conflict.

Text & voice

The text is built around actor quotations and empirical excerpts in or-

der to keep the narrative close to the voices present in the material. The story is therefore not fictional or speculative world-building, but a situated reconstruction of an existing process. While speculative storytelling can be valuable in architectural practice, the purpose here is to work with what has been said, documented and experienced.

Sequence & rhythm

A simple and repetitive sequence rhythm is used to support recognition and readability. Rather than relying on formal surprise or dramatic shifts, the narrative uses a steady pace so that the reader can focus on the unfolding situation, the actors' positions and the conflicts embedded in the material.

Narrative drivers

Conflict is used as the main narrative driver because the renovation process itself has been shaped by conflict. Structuring the story around key tensions makes visible how different roles, interests, responsibilities and power relations are activated in the process. This structure helps reveal not only explicit disagreements, but also less visible power relations,

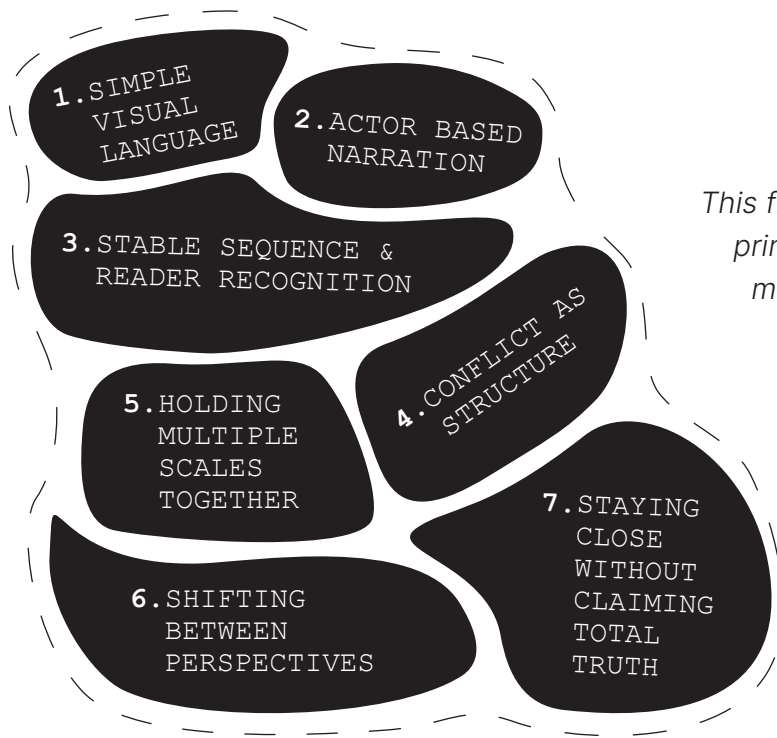


Figure 7:
**DESIGN PRINCIPLES
FRAMEWORK**

This framework summarises the design principles used to translate empirical material into the graphic narratives.

institutional logics and conflicting rationalities.

Composing & framing

The composition of the story moves between different spaces and scales, for example the intimate scale of the bathroom, the collective scale of the courtyard, the institutional scale of meetings and negotiations, and the abstract scale of legal and economic documents. Frames are used to hold these scales together, showing how decisions made in one setting become consequences in another.

Reader position

The reader is positioned as an observer moving between actors, spaces, and documents. Rather than being guided towards one single interpretation, the reader is invited to compare

positions, notice tensions, and recognise how different accounts of the same process coexist.

Ethics of representation

Since the story is based on real material, the design avoids claiming complete access to any actor's experience or intention. Quotes, documents and events are selected and recomposed, but the narrative remains transparent about its empirical grounding. Interview material is anonymised and the visual narrative avoids direct identification of individuals, while public actors and public documents are referred to where relevant. The aim is not to produce a total or neutral truth, but to create a careful, situated account that can support recognition, reflection, and dialogue.

05.2 **DESIGN ITERATIONS**

The development of the graphic novel was not a linear movement from analysis to representation, but an iterative process in which drawing, sequencing, and editing became ways of testing the material. Early iterations explored how quotations, actor positions, spatial settings, and temporal shifts could be placed in relation to one another without reducing the complexity of the renovation process.

Several questions guided the iterations: whose voice is present in the frame, what kind of space is being shown, what is made visible, and what remains outside the image? Some tests focused on the legal and institutional setting of the process, while others moved closer to the apartment, the bathroom, the courtyard, or the meeting room. Through these shifts, the narrative form gradually became a way of moving between scales: from technical documents and formal decisions to lived consequences and everyday vulnerability.

The design process also involved testing how much information each frame could carry. Too much explanatory text risked turning the story into a report, while too little made the relations between actors and decisions

difficult to follow. The final approach therefore combines short textual fragments, selected quotations, spatial cues and visual structures. Rather than illustrating the analysis after it was complete, the iterations helped clarify what the analysis was trying to show.

05.3 **NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION**

The final narrative is constructed around the six key tensions identified through the analysis. Instead of following the renovation process as a single chronological sequence, the graphic novel is organised as a series of thematic chapters. Each chapter traces one tension across different spaces, actors, and moments in the process.

This structure makes it possible to show how the same renovation is understood differently depending on where one stands within it. For the landlord, the process appears through technical necessity, long-term maintenance, project economy, public procurement, and property management. For tenants, the same process is encountered through rent increases, uncertainty, loss of influence, changes to the home, and the risk of not being able to remain. For legal and institutional actors, the renovation is translated into formal categories, permissions, standards, and assessments of reasonableness.

The narrative therefore moves between different kinds of material: legal provisions, board documents, tenant information letters, media material, interviews and legal decisions. These fragments are arranged se-

quentially to make visible how renovation is produced through overlapping decisions rather than through one single act.

06

STORIES FROM SIRIUSGATAN

This section presents the six narrative chapters of the architectural graphic novel. Together, they translate the key tensions into a sequential visual narrative that traces how renovation is shaped through relations, conflicts, negotiations, and lived consequences.

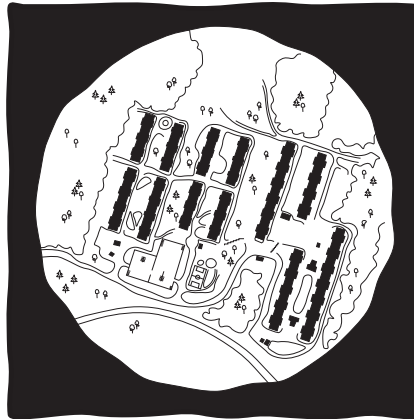
Chapter 1

AFFORDABILITY vs. TECHNICAL NECESSITY

1.



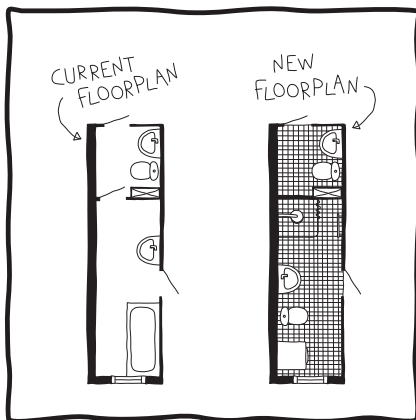
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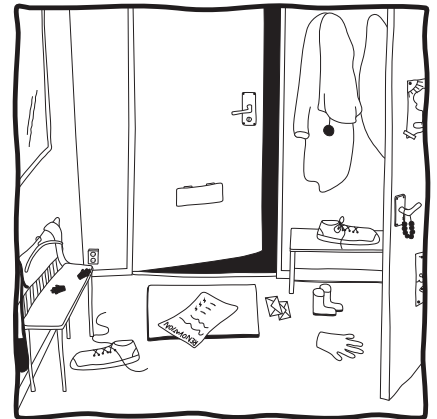
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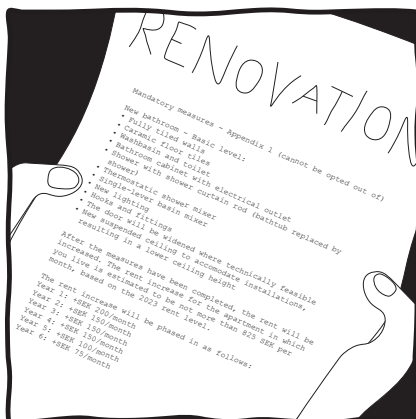
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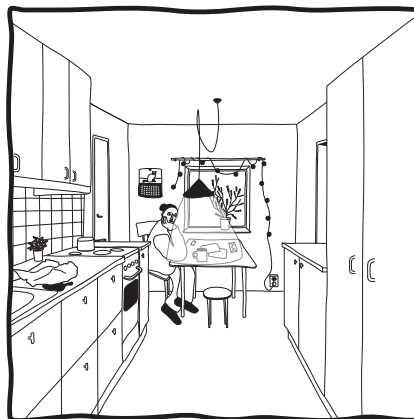
6.



7.



8.



9.



1. “On Siriusgatan, the median income is 171,500 kronor a year, almost half of the average in Gothenburg. In the spring, all rents in municipal housing were raised by 4.25 percent, and the previously mentioned facade renovation on Siriusgatan has already led to a monthly rent increase of 750 kronor.” (TE8.2; Terán Öman, 2023).

2. “The buildings were built in the early 1970s and require renovation.” (LA1.2; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2020, Technical investigation, p. 2).

3. “Moisture damage discovered during facade renovation requires pipe replacement.” (LA1.3; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2020, p. 1).

4. “To fully remove the mould growth, we need to demolish the interior walls, including tiles, chipboard, plastic and timber studs, and build new walls without organic materials.” (LA1.4; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2020, Technical investigation, p. 4). Illustration based on: Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2023, p. 4.

5. “A property owner may ... carry out such standard-raising measures on the property as have a more than insignificant effect on the utility value of a residential apartment. ... For such measures to be carried out, they must have been approved by the affected residential tenants, or the Rent and Tenancy Tribunal must have granted permission for the measures.” (LE5.1; Swedish Land Code, 1970, Chapter 12, Section 18 d).

6. “If the landlord wishes to carry out such measures as referred to in Section 18 d, the landlord shall notify the affected residential tenants of this in writing.” (LE5.2; Swedish Land Code, 1970, Chapter 12, Section 18 e). Text in illustration based on: Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2023, pp. 2, 5.

7. “Approval of the measures: In order to carry out the measures, we need your approval. If we do not receive your approval, Familjebostäder will submit an application to the Rent and Tenancy Tribunal requesting permission to carry out the measures.” (LA10.1; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2023, p. 8). Text in illustration: Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2023, pp. 2, 5.

8. “Bergsjön is a vulnerable area. Many large families with several children live on Siriusgatan. We cannot afford to pay more rent increases.” (TE1.1; Engelbrektson, 2022, “Namninsamling” section).

9. “Right now I pay 6,700 kronor. It is difficult because I am alone. I work as an assistant nurse in an elderly care home and I do not receive housing allowance.” (TE1.3; Löwendahl, 2022, “Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section).

10.



11.



12.



13.



14.



15.



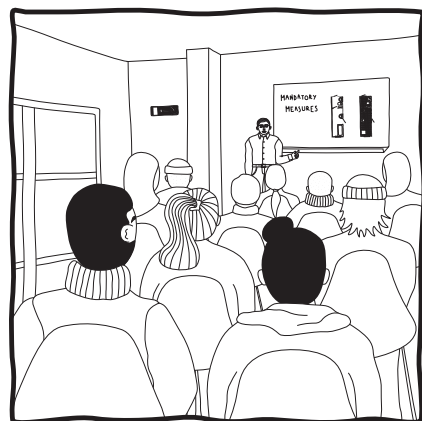
16.



17.



18.



10. “It affects us very much. Everything is becoming very expensive It will be very hard for us to stay.” (TE1.5; Löwendahl, 2023a, opening section).

11. “We are people who already have difficulty living, both because of the economy and everything happening in the world. The only safe place was our home. And now that is under threat. People cannot afford to pay.” (TE3.1; Löwendahl, 2023b, “Inte bara hyrorna som blivit dyrare” section).

12. “I am not alone in being worried. Many low-income families live here who cannot handle several rent increases in a row.” (TE2.7; Engelbrektson, 2022, opening section).

13. “Before the facade renovation, the tenants were informed about what the work would involve and that there was an opportunity to choose optional upgrades ... in exchange for a further increase in rent. Nothing was said at those meetings about it also becoming relevant to renovate indoors and that such a renovation would entail additional rent increases.” (TE7.3; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 10–11).

14. “... has lived in the building for 15 years and has an acceptable rent for his three-room apartment. But as a single father he has no margin for increased costs. Now he is afraid he will be forced to move if the rent becomes too high.” (TE2.6; Engelbrektson, 2022, opening section).

15. “... takes out frozen coriander, sighs over how expensive food has become.

He admits that he often rides the tram without paying to save money. He has deprioritised winter boots for himself; his sneakers will have to do even if his toes get cold.” (TE9.1; Löwendahl, 2023a, opening section).

16. “People will be forced to take in lodgers, or move from three-room apartments to two-room apartments. Or move away completely and live somewhere else. The question is, where?” (TE2.1; Löwendahl, 2022, “Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section).

17. “The Northern Gothenburg Tenants’ Association conducted a survey among the more than 1,000 households on Siriusgatan. Of the more than 400 respondents, two thirds estimated that they would need to move if the rent increased by a further 200 kronor.” (TE2.5; Löwendahl, 2022, “Överraskade av de starka reaktionerna” section).

18. “We looked at the needs and made a decision about pipe replacement. That also means that we will renovate the bathrooms in the building.” (LA1.1; Engelbrektson, 2022, “Kakel och klinkers” section).

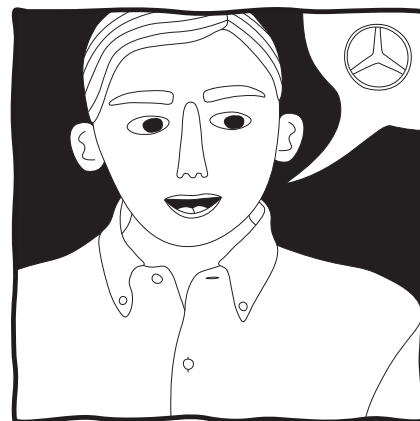
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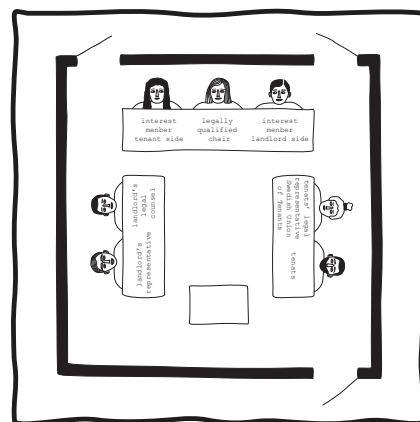
22.



23.



24.



25.



26.



27.



19. “There are people who cry. People who may not have food to eat. Do you understand? People here do not earn 50,000. They may earn 15,000 after tax. How are they supposed to manage? Some only have one income, some do not work, some are pensioners.” (TE1.4; Löwendahl, 2022, “Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section).

20. “We understand that it is stressful for our tenants to receive high rent increases when we renovate. And we understand how much disposable income there is. We are prepared to go far in phasing in rents.” (LA8.1; Löwendahl, 2024, “Överväger att trappa in hyror långsammare” section).

21. “Then a representative from the landlord came to one of the consultation meetings up there. He was going to explain this idea of standard increase, and he thought he was being pedagogical, so he said something like, ‘if you have an old Volvo and then get a Mercedes instead, it becomes a little more expensive.’ As if, right now you have a shabby bathroom, but you are going to get a ‘Mercedes’ bathroom, a nicer bathroom. Then of course it becomes a bit more expensive because the standard is higher.” (LA5.5; TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

22. “... then he just stood up and shouted, ‘WE DO NOT WANT A DAMN MERCEDES,’ right at him. And everyone was so furious, the whole room felt on the verge of revolt. ... People fare-dodge, you know, at Nymånegatan, and if ticket inspectors show up, half of them jump off. People cannot even afford a tram

pass. And then he comes in talking about a Mercedes.” (TE5.6; TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

23. “It is completely crazy that rents have risen so much in exactly these areas. I do not know how they are thinking. How are people supposed to survive? They really need to think again, because this is not possible.” (TE1.6; Löwendahl, 2023a, opening section).

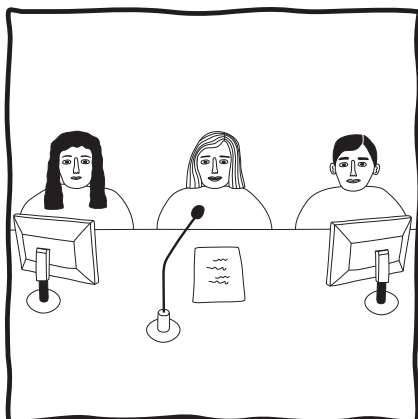
24. “If an affected residential tenant does not approve the measure, the landlord may apply to the Rent and Tenancy Tribunal for permission to carry out the measure.” (LE5.2; Swedish Land Code, Chapter 12, Section 18 e, second paragraph).

25. “A pipe renovation is necessary.” (LA1.5; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 5).

26. “The tenants feel deceived into first voluntarily agreeing to a number of optional upgrades and then shortly afterwards being forced to accept additional standard increases they did not request.” (TE7.2; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 7).

27. “The facade renovation meant a rent increase of almost 15 percent for the tenants and the phasing-in of that rent is still ongoing.” (TE7.4; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 10–11).

28.



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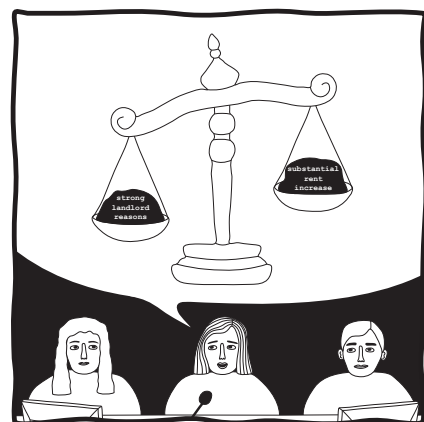
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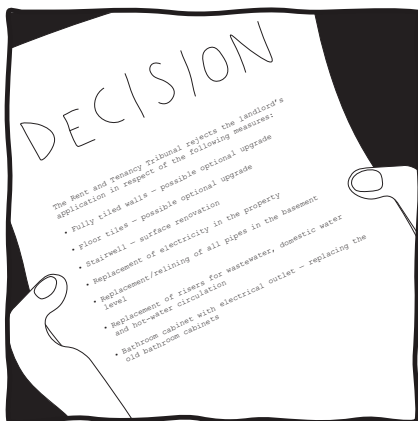
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35.



28. “The application shall be approved if the landlord has a considerable interest in the measure being carried out and it is not unreasonable against the tenant that it is carried out.” (LE1.1; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 11).

29. “According to established practice, it is for the landlord as property owner to make the technical and property-economic assessments that determine the extent of the improvement and alteration measures.” (LE1.2; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 12).

30. “In the assessment of whether the measure is unreasonable against the tenant, the landlord’s interest shall be weighed against the interests tenants in general may be assumed to have in the measure not being carried out.” (LE2.1; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 11).

31. “Avoiding rent increases has in the preparatory works been stated to be a relevant tenant interest.” (LE2.2; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15).

32. “When the landlord wishes to carry out a measure that can be assumed to lead to a substantial rent increase, and which goes beyond what normal and appropriate property management requires, the tenant’s interest in the rent not being increased may then outweigh the landlord’s interest in the measure being carried out.” (LE3.5; Government Bill 2001/02:41, p. 25).

33. “The larger the rent increase a measure can be assumed to cause, the stronger the reasons the landlord should be able to show in order to carry out the measure.” (LE2.3; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15).

34. “The Rent and Tenancy Tribunal considers that the measures may lead to rent levels that, taken together, would be unreasonable for the 35 tenants who have not approved the measures.” / “Fifteen of these have said that they do not have the means to remain in their apartments and would have to move.” (LE3.1 / LE3.2; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15). Text in illustration: Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 2–3.

35. “It was a major victory, and it was a relief to hear. It has been really tough. Now we are going to celebrate on Sunday and invite the whole area and all the tenants.” (TE1.9; Löwendahl, 2023b, “Inte bara hyrorna som blivit dyrare” section).

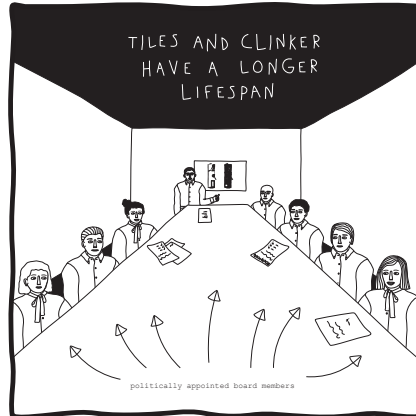
Chapter 2

NECESSARY MAINTENANCE vs. STANDARD-RAISING UPGRADING

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2.



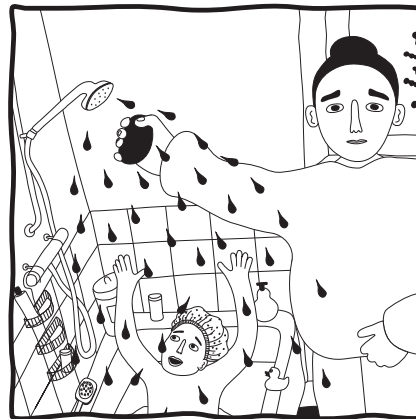
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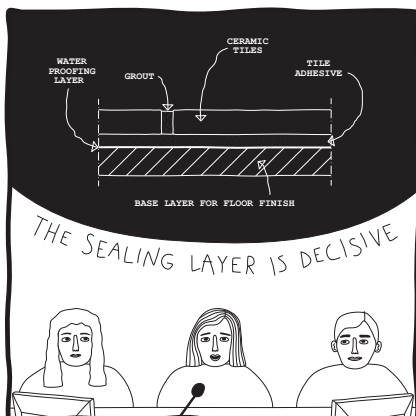
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1. “Now they want to renovate the bathroom. And we have said: if you want to replace the pipes, of course, but the rest should not happen at our expense. It feels as if they just want an excuse to keep raising the rents.” (TE4.1; Löwendahl, 2022, “Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section).
2. “Our position is that wall tiles and floor clinker have a longer lifespan than vinyl flooring and wet-room wallpaper.” (LA2.3; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 5).
3. “The tenants accept that there is a maintenance need, but question the need for standard-raising measures.” (TE4.2; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 6–7).
4. “The tenants would rather keep rents down and think that half-tiled bathrooms and vinyl flooring are enough.” / “The tenants also dispute that tiles and clinker can extend the life span of the bathrooms. In addition, the floor will become colder with clinker, especially during the winter. Colder floors are not experienced as a higher standard by the tenants.” (TE4.4; Engelbrektson, 2022, “Kakel och klinkers” section / TE5.3; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 6–7).
5. “For a person who is poor, no optimal standard is required.” (TE5.2; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023).
6. “We really do not see that there are any alternatives other than choosing tiles and clinker. It has to last for many tenants in the future. That is the

standard we normally always have.” (LA2.1; Löwendahl, 2022, “Överraskade av de starka reaktionerna” section).

7. “The tribunal is of the opinion that a wet room does not become tighter or safer with clinker compared to vinyl flooring. It is the sealing layer behind the tiles that is decisive.” / “There are no statistics or scientific evidence that there are more water damages in vinyl floors than in clinker.” (LE6.1 / LE6.2; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 14).

Chapter 3

TENANT INFLUENCE vs.

PREDETERMINED PROJECT LOGIC

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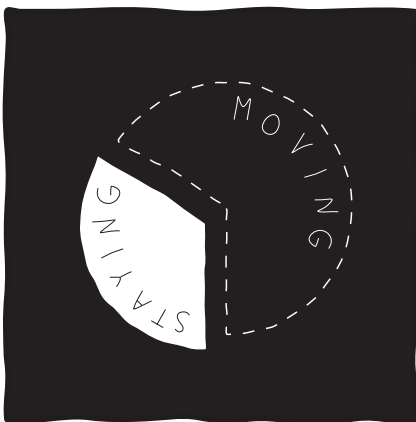
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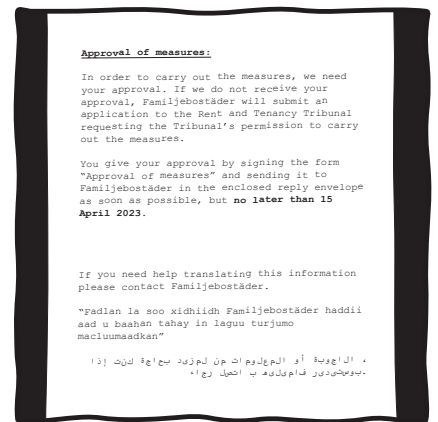
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1. “In all our activities, dialogue with both tenants and Gothenburg residents is central. For us, it is self-evident to listen to the tenants—it is their homes and their living environments that we work in. Our service is characterised by proximity, openness and cooperation.” (LA10.2; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, n.d.-c, “Vårt uppdrag” section).

2. “In drizzling rain and darkness, around a hundred tenants marched through the courtyards on Siriusgatan on Thursday evening. Many carried laminated signs: ‘No more rent increases’, ‘No rent increase for necessary maintenance’, ‘Familjebostäder: Listen to the tenants’, and ‘We want reuse.’” (TU1.5; Löwendahl, 2022, opening section).

3. “I am a cleaner and start work at four o’clock. I am very tired and should be sleeping now, but I want to be here and protest against Familjebostäder. We asked how much they want to raise the rent, but they do not want to say.” (TE1.2; Löwendahl, 2022, opening section).

4. “In a survey among the affected households, two thirds of the more than 400 respondents stated that they would need to move if rent was increased by a further 200 kronor.” (TE2.4; Terán Öman, 2023).

5. “The landlords have lots of resources, but we are not powerless either. If we raise our voices, they have to take us into account. So one should not underestimate the power of organising.” (TU1.3; Terán Öman, 2023, final section).

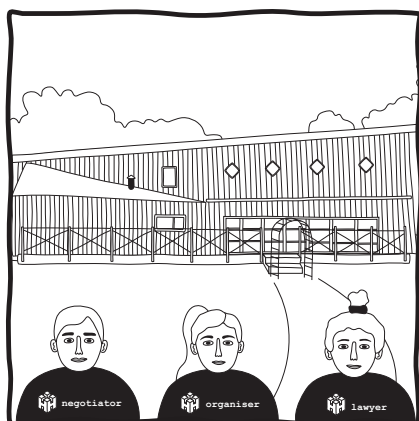
6. “As a rule, landlords put a lot of pressure on people to sign. And several did during the process. They submitted the application to the tribunal, and then it became even more concrete: ‘shit, I have to go to the tribunal.’ You are worried about your tenancy contract, you do not fully understand the process, and we have not reached out with the information saying that you do not risk your tenancy contract and that it costs nothing.” (TU3.1; TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026). Text in illustration: Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2023, p. 8.

7. “There were many active tenants spreading the information that you have the right to say no. Many are otherwise afraid; they think they can be evicted or punished.” (TU1.2; Terán Öman, 2023, final section).

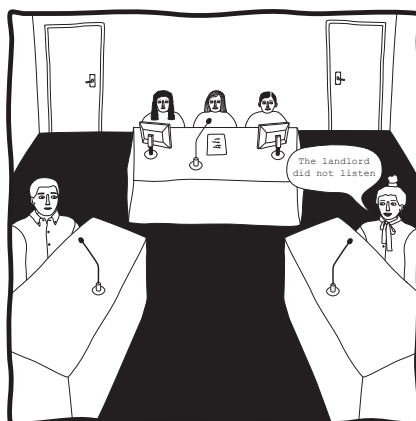
8. “The rule is that you should have the right to influence, and that is part of why we want this agreement, especially with public housing companies.” (TU2.1; TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026).

9. “One or two tenants contacted us directly and started cases. Then we had a local association with a very engaged member who took responsibility, because not everyone in that property understands Swedish. So she took responsibility for making sure that we reached people. We need to reach people, we need to knock on doors.” (TU2.3; TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026).

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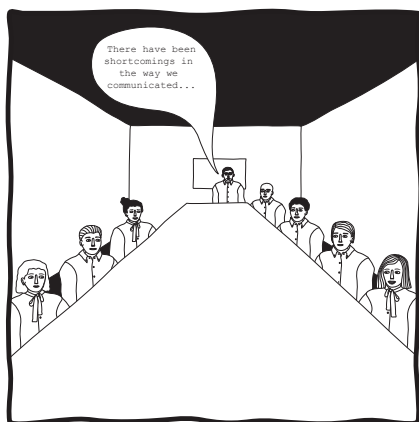
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10. “When we hear about a renovation, we invite members to a meeting. Negotiators explain what this will mean for your rent and what the process will look like. We have organisers who explain how you as a tenant can engage. A lawyer is also there to explain what rights you have in the process. You have the right to influence. You have the right to approve, or not approve.” (TU2.2; TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026).

11. “The tenants object to the landlord’s claim that consultation meetings have taken place. ... The landlord appeared at these information meetings and unilaterally declared that this was the lowest level the landlord could accept and that all tenants had to accept it, and thereafter explained that they were open to discussing different optional upgrades. ... The tenants were overridden and the landlord did not listen to the tenants’ proposals or needs.” (TE6.2; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 7–8).

12. “... believes that better dialogue would benefit all parties, including the property owner. The landlord is not the enemy, he points out. They are welcome to fix things. But at the same time they cannot just raise the rent however they want. They are responsible, and we live here. We can talk. Why should we be in court when we can handle it ourselves?” (TE6.1; Löwendahl, 2023b, “Efterlyser större lyhördhet hos hyresvärderna” section).

13. “There have been shortcomings in the way we communicated, which we have learned from.” / “We need to

communicate in several languages, explain what can and cannot be influenced, and start dialogue and conversations at an early stage.” (LA9.1 / LA9.2; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024b, p. 4).

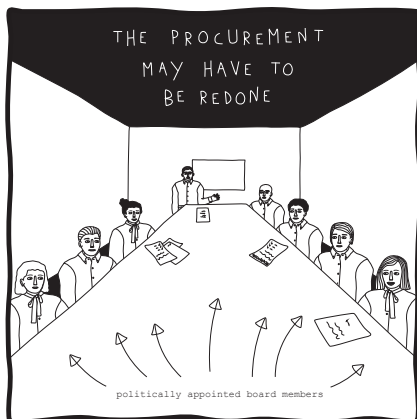
14. “The company has in the project carried out procurement and signed a conditional agreement with the contractor. It is a long chain of activities and decisions in projects that depend on each other.” (LA7.4; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 6). Text in illustration: Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 2–3.

15. “The tribunal questions how a municipal housing company can carry out procurement before consultation has taken place and approval has been obtained from the tenants or issued by the tribunal. The consultation and balancing of interests intended by the legislator would then become mere window dressing.” (LE5.3; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15).

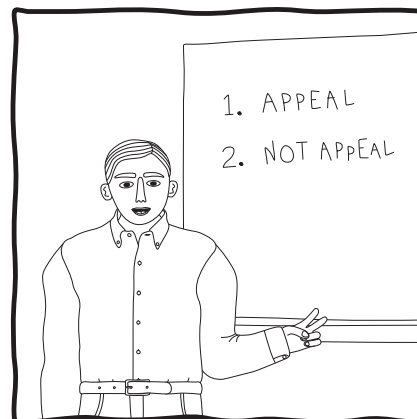
16. “In this case there is reason to make a different assessment than usual concerning the significance that a possible rent increase should be given in the balancing of interests.” (LE6.3; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15).

17. “That ruling is unusual, but at the same time it shows that it really can pay off to fight back. I believe the tribunal’s decision was strongly influenced by the fact that a majority of tenants protested and opposed the renovation plans in different ways.” (TU1.1; The Swedish Union of Tenants, 2023, para. 6).

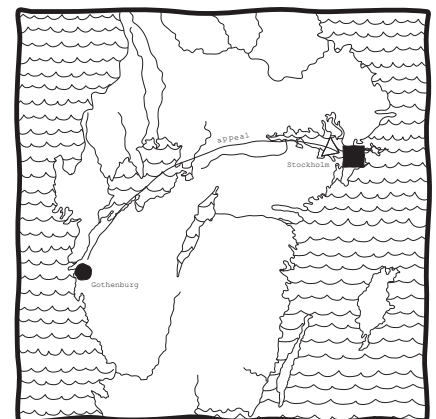
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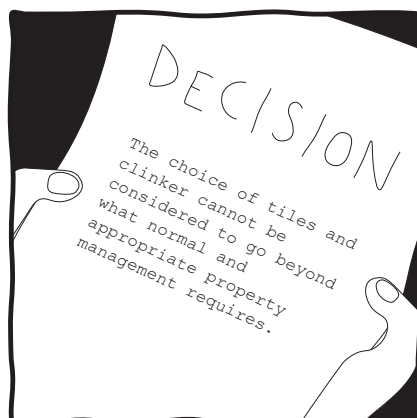
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18. “If there is a bigger change in the project, it may mean that the procurement has to be redone.” (LA7.3; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 6).

19. “We have two paths to take. Appeal or allow the decision to become final. If we do not appeal, the investment decision falls and we need to start over from the beginning. Regardless of the choice, there will be delays of approximately one year. ... My proposal is to appeal, give the tenants long rent phase-ins (12 years), and maintain the model for tiles and clinker.” (LA8.4; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024b, p. 2).

20. “The board decides to appeal the decision of the Rent and Tenancy Tribunal, Case No. H 2971-2973-23, 2023-12-06, concerning Siriusgatan 54–58, 66, 68–70.” (PO1.4; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 1).

21. “But then came the blow: the politicians chose to appeal. They blamed the civil servants, and the civil servants blamed the politicians. But it was in fact a political decision, although one recommended by the civil servants.” (PO1.3; TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

22. “It is not the board’s role to micro-manage that. The company saw a need to appeal and obtain guidance, and you have to ask them about the details. The board has chosen not to intervene in that. We stay with the more strategic, overarching questions.” / “To make sure the company carries out its

renovation plan, and returns to us on how this can have as little economic impact on tenants as possible.” (PO1.2; Löwendahl, 2024, “Renovering är upp till värden” section / PO1.1; Löwendahl, 2024, “Unikt beslut stoppade kakel och golvklinkers” section).

23. “It has not emerged that the landlord’s choice of method is governed by other than technically and property-economic rational reasons.” (LE4.1; Svea Court of Appeal, 2024, p. 7).

24. “The landlord therefore has a considerable interest in tiling the walls and laying clinker on the floors in the bathrooms.” (LE4.2; Svea Court of Appeal, 2024, p. 7).

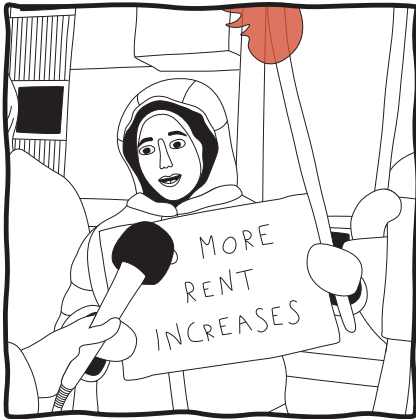
25. “The choice of tiles and clinker cannot be considered to go beyond what normal and appropriate property management requires.” (LE4.3; Svea Court of Appeal, 2024, pp. 7–8).

26. “The twelve-year phasing-in helps a little, of course. But there was also a dip in activism. A very long time passed between the tribunal’s decision and the Court of Appeal’s decision. People moved.” (TU7.1; TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

Chapter 4

LIVED VULNERABILITY vs. PROJECT ECONOMY

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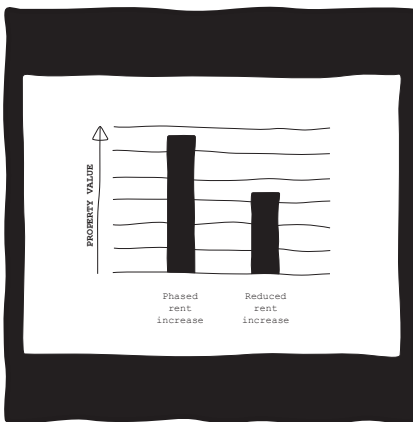
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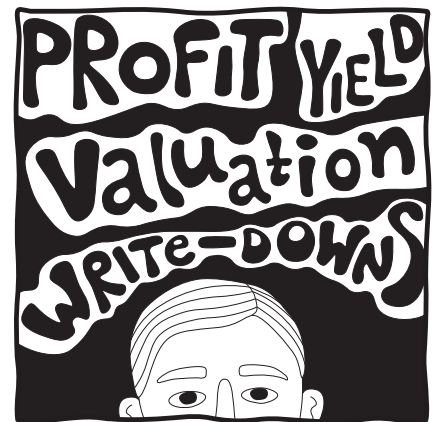
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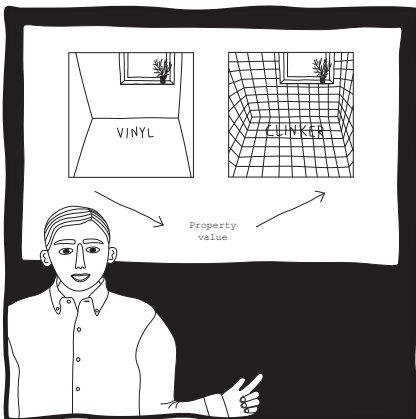
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1. “We do not live here because we like it very much. There are drugs everywhere, for example. You do not want your children here. But we live here because the rent is reasonable.” (TE8.1; Löwendahl, 2022, “Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section).

2. “There are such contrasts. At the same time Familjebostäder is very active in projects to fight crime and prevent vulnerable areas. But they do not understand that if you cannot afford the rent, then maybe, as many said, ‘my mother was a single parent, I got so upset seeing her struggle with the rent, not even having enough food at the end of the month, she was hungry, so I started selling drugs to help my mother.’” (TU6.2; TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

3. “I have had people from there say: if they raise it that much, then I will have to start selling my body, because I cannot think of any other way to support myself.” (TU6.1; TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

5. “Project economy in the investment decision is based on rent increases being charged for the standard-raising measures. The decision also relies on income from optional upgrades.” (LA4.3; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 7).

4. “The effect of giving rent rebates in the form of phasing-in has significantly less impact on project economy than refraining from rent adjustments for standard increases.” (LA8.3; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 7).

6. “Estimated total production cost is approximately 78,000,000 kronor. The project achieves 5.4 percent profitability, and the direct yield is 3.43 percent. The properties have been externally valued to assess any need for write-down after the proposed interior renovation. The valuation is based on a rent increase of 750 kronor per month for all bathrooms. If the rent negotiation were to result in a rent increase lower than 600 kronor per month for bathrooms, there is a need for write downs.” (LA4.2; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2022, p. 1).

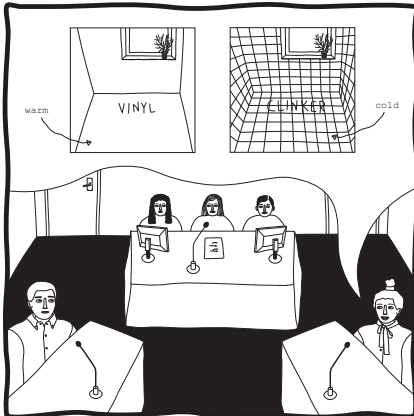
7. “Alternative execution with vinyl flooring would mean write-downs. ... For stage 1, write-downs would be approximately 24,000,000 kronor if no bathrooms are allowed tiles and clinker.” (LA3.2; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 8).

8. “I think the worry remains.” (TU7.2; TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026).

Chapter 5

SITUATED NEED AND USABILITY VS. INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDISATION

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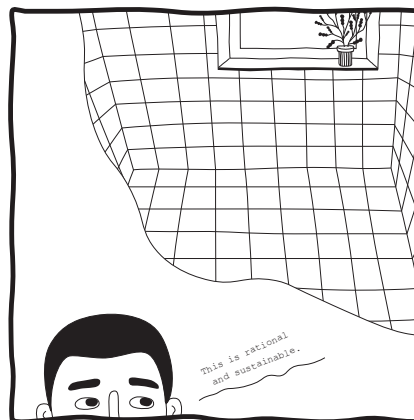
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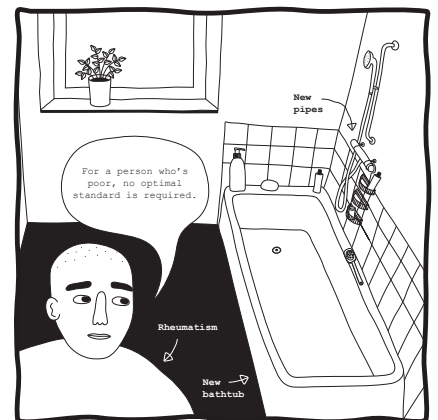
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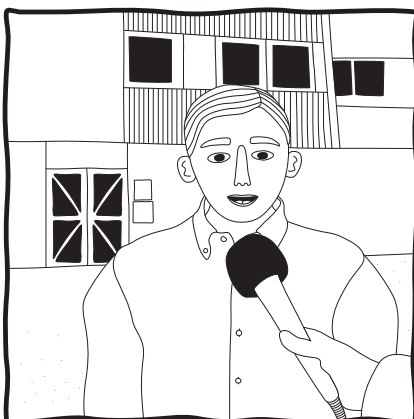
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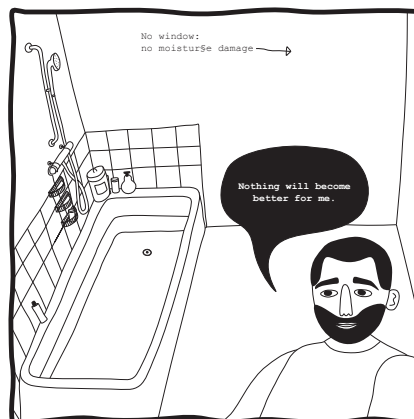
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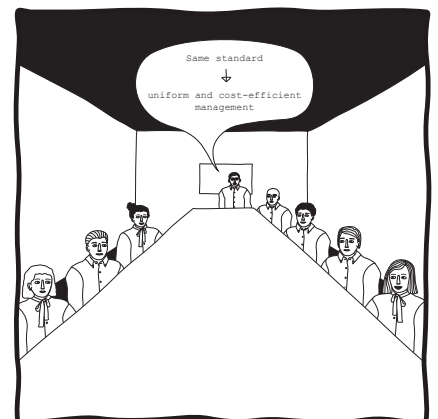
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1. “The tenants particularly object to the bathroom being fully tiled. Today there is vinyl flooring, which has been shown to have a similar lifespan to the bathroom pipes The main reason why tenants in the property, and tenants in general, are likely to want vinyl flooring in the bathroom is that it is not as cold as clinker, which conducts heat. In the properties in question there are many families with children, and then a cold bathroom floor is a problem.” (TE5.5; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 10–11).

2. “The tenants accept that there is a maintenance need, but question the need for standard-raising measures.” (TE5.5; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 10–11).

3. “Many tenants, especially families with children, will miss their bathtubs.” (TE5.4; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 7).

4. “In the industry, it is still standard to renovate bathrooms with wall tiles and floor clinker.” (LA2.2; Löwendahl, 2023b, “Två olika besked om badrumsrenovering i samma område” section).

5. “According to practice, it is also most rational and sustainable from a property perspective to fully tile and lay clinker in bathrooms.” (LA2.5; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 5).

6. “He has no possibility of moving because of illness. The pipes in his bathroom are new. His bathtub is new. A bathtub is important for a person suffering from rheumatism and he really

needs his bathtub. His bathroom works excellently. For a person who is poor, no optimal standard is required. Nothing is damaged in his bathroom floor.” (TE5.2; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 8–9).

7. “... we want it to be just as nice regardless of which neighbourhood you live in.” (LA5.3; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, n.d.-b, “Varför klinker och kakel i badrummen?” section).

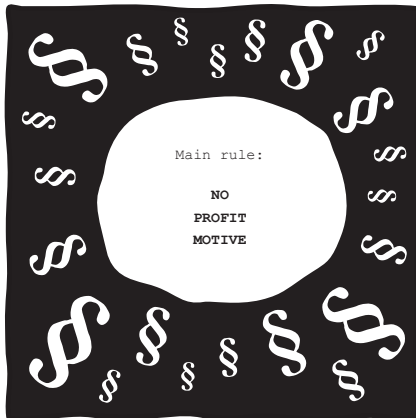
8. “His bathroom has no window. He questions the need to renovate the bathroom in his apartment since there is no moisture damage in connection with his bathroom. He has no problem with his bathroom. It works perfectly. It feels unfair that he should get a higher rent for something he does not see as a standard increase. Nothing will become better for him.” (TE5.1; Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 8).

9. “When all bathrooms are renovated to the same standard, it gives cost-efficient procurement, a uniform and cost-efficient management.” (LA7.1; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 5).

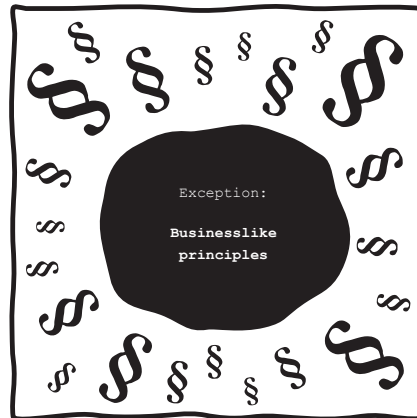
Chapter 6

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY vs. **MARKET LOGIC**

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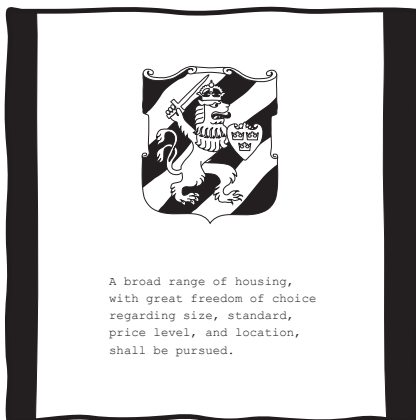
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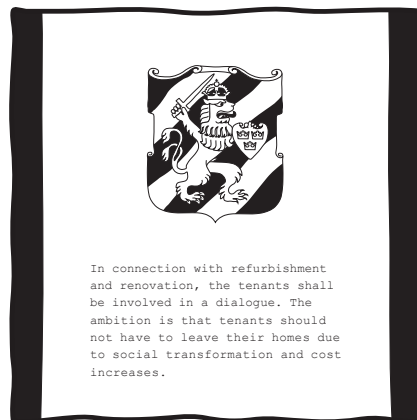
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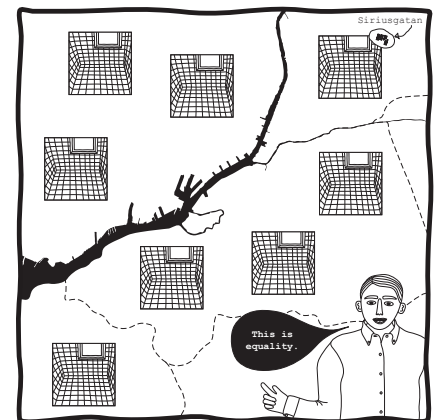
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1. “Municipalities and regions may not charge fees higher than those corresponding to the costs of the services or utilities they provide.” / “Municipalities and regions may conduct business activities, provided that they are carried out without a profit motive and aim to provide public utility facilities or services to members.” (LE7.2 / LE7.3; Local Government Act, 2017, Chapter 2, Sections 6 and 7).

2. “A municipally owned public housing company shall conduct its operations in accordance with businesslike principles, notwithstanding Chapter 2, Sections 6 and 7 of the Local Government Act (2017:725).” (LE7.1; Act on Public Municipal Housing Companies, 2010, Section 2).

3. “Development of the value of the properties takes place from both an economic and a technical perspective. The economic perspective means that the market value of our properties is to be maintained, which is mainly influenced by the market’s return requirements and the development of rental income.” (LA4.1; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, n.d.-a, “Ekonomisk hållbarhet” section).

4. “The company shall strive to ensure that, within the group, attractive and high-quality housing, let as rental housing, is offered to different types of housing consumers. A broad range of housing, with great freedom of choice regarding size, standard, price level, and location, shall be pursued. One-sided forms of tenure increase segregation. The company shall therefore contribute to creating a city with mixed housing

and tenure forms.” (LA5.6; City of Gothenburg, n.d., Chapter 2, § 4, p. 3).

5. “Many homes are in need of refurbishment and energy-efficiency improvements. In connection with refurbishment and renovation, the tenants shall be involved in a dialogue. The ambition is that tenants should not have to leave their homes due to social transformation and cost increases.” (LA10.3; City of Gothenburg, n.d., Chapter 2, § 6, p. 3).

6. “From an equality perspective, it is important that Bergsjön is not given a different solution than other parts of our housing stock.” (LA5.2; Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 9).

7. “On Siriusgatan, the median income is 171,500 kronor a year, almost half of the average in Gothenburg. In the spring, all rents in municipal housing were raised by 4.25 percent, and the previously mentioned facade renovation on Siriusgatan has already led to a monthly rent increase of 750 kronor.” (TE8.2; Terán Öman, 2023).

07

DISCUSSION

This chapter reflects on the thesis as a whole. It discusses the main findings, the contribution, and the role of architectural storytelling in exploring complex spatial processes.

07.1 REFLECTIONS

Graphic storytelling as analytical practice

This thesis has explored architectural graphic storytelling as a way of working with contested spatial processes. Rather than using drawing to present a finished architectural proposal, the work has used drawing, sequencing, framing, and quotation to organise empirical material and make relations visible. In this sense the graphic narrative is not an illustration added after the analysis. It is part of the analytical process itself.

The iterative movement between empirical material, analytical themes, spatial-temporal mapping, and narrative construction was central to the knowledge produced in the thesis. When statements, documents, spaces, and events were placed in relation to one another, patterns emerged that were less visible when each source was read separately. Legal decisions, board documents, technical descriptions, media accounts, interviews, and tenant statements each contained partial views of the renovation process. The graphic storytelling process made it possible to trace how these partial views connected across actors, spaces, and time.

This supports the understanding of architecture as a practice that cannot be separated from the external forces that shape spatial production. Lefebvre's understanding of space as socially produced, and Till's argument that architecture is affected by "multiple and conflicting force fields", provide important anchors for this interpretation (Lefebvre, 1991, as cited in Till, 2009, p. 125; Till, 2009, p. 126). In the Siriusgatan case, legal procedures, financial calculations, institutional priorities, technical assessments, and everyday vulnerability were not background conditions. They actively shaped what kind of renovation became possible, what alternatives were considered reasonable, what forms of tenant influence were available, and how consequences were distributed.

What the method made visible

One of the most important outcomes of the work is that the renovation process became readable as a multi-sited spatial process. The bathroom was the most immediate site of intervention, but the process was also produced through information letters, consultation meetings, rent negotiations, board decisions, valuation assumptions, tribunal arguments, and

appeal procedures. These settings are not usually understood as architectural spaces in a conventional sense, yet they shaped the transformation of the home.

This finding responds directly to the disciplinary challenge discussed in the thesis: conventional architectural drawings can show proposed spatial outcomes, but they often struggle to show the legal, financial, institutional, and lived processes through which those outcomes are produced. Till's critique of architectural abstraction and "visual noise" is useful here, since it describes how architecture's internal systems can prevent the discipline from hearing the external world on which it depends (Till, 2009, pp. 87–88). The graphic narrative became a way of bringing these processes back into the architectural field of view.

The result also connects to the societal context of Swedish public housing renovation. Literature on the transformation of *allmännyttan* describes how municipal housing companies have increasingly been shaped by market-oriented reforms, financial interests, and business-like principles (Christophers, 2013, pp. 887–893; Hedin et al., 2012, pp. 443–446; Kadioğlu & Listerborn, 2025, pp. 5–6). The Siriusgatan case shows how this broader shift becomes concrete in a specific renovation process: through

calculations of value, assumptions about rent increases, legal assessments of reasonableness, and tenant concerns about whether they can remain in place.

The method also showed that visual sequencing is not neutral. Decisions about what to place before or after, what to show together, and what to leave outside the frame shaped the interpretation of the material. Drawing the process as a sequence made certain relations easier to see: how a technical statement could reframe a lived concern, or how a domestic consequence could be connected back to an institutional decision. In this sense, the graphic narrative did not only communicate the analysis; it became a way of testing how relations, tensions, and consequences could be made visible, comparable, and open to discussion.

Patterns of contradiction

The process made visible a set of recurring contradictions. Technical necessity did not appear as a purely technical matter, but became tied to property-economic reasoning and valuation. Tenant influence was formally present but often structurally limited, appearing after major decisions had already been shaped. Affordability was treated as an economic concern, while the material showed how it also affected everyday life and

security. Municipal housing appeared as a field where public responsibility and market-oriented requirements operate together, without being fully resolved. These contradictions are developed in the concluding remarks below.

Representation, ethics, and selection

Working with real conflicts made the ethical role of representation central. The graphic narrative does not provide a complete account of Siriusgatan, nor does it claim neutrality. It is a situated reconstruction based on selected empirical material. This selection is not a weakness if it is made transparent. The analytical themes, source-coding, and appendices are therefore important because they show how the narrative is grounded in empirical material and how quotes and statements have been translated into visual form.

Doucet's discussion of situated storytelling is important here. Stories can help evaluate situations in a more complex and entangled way, but they can also hide mechanisms of power, bias, and preference if their construction is not made visible (Doucet, 2022, pp. 40, 46). In this thesis, the aim has not been to smooth the conflict into a coherent or persuasive narrative. The aim has been to keep the tensions visible, while still making

the process possible to follow.

This also returns to Till's critique of architectural abstraction. If architectural representation can create a false sense of clarity and control, then the task here has been to use representation differently: not to remove uncertainty, but to make the relations that produce uncertainty readable (Till, 2009, pp. 178–179). The graphic novel therefore works against the kind of visual simplification that detaches architecture from the social, political, economic, and lived conditions through which space is produced.

Limits of the work

The work is shaped by the limits of the available material and by its focus on one specific case. Many tenant voices come from public and conflict-oriented sources, while institutional positions are often documented through formal texts, legal material, and organisational documents. This affects the balance and texture of the narrative. The thesis therefore does not claim to represent all residents' views or the full complexity of the housing company's internal decision-making. Rather, it offers a situated reading of how positions, claims, conflicts, and consequences appear in the collected material. The concluding remarks that follow draw together what this reading shows about renovation, rep-

resentation, and the production of spatial change.

07.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Relational knowledge through graphic storytelling

This thesis has asked how architectural graphic storytelling can expand architectural representation by supporting knowledge-making and creating conditions for dialogue in municipal housing renovation processes. Through the case of Siriusgatan, it shows that graphic storytelling can reorganise empirical material so that relations between actors, spaces, documents, decisions, and consequences become visible.

The knowledge produced through the work is therefore relational. It does not consist of one new fact about the renovation process. Rather, it consists of a clearer understanding of how technical necessity, standard-raising measures, rent increases, valuation logics, legal procedures, tenant influence, and lived vulnerability were connected in the production of spatial change. This connects to Lefebvre's understanding of space as socially produced, and to Till's argument that architecture must engage with the external forces through which it is shaped (Lefebvre, 1991, as cited in Till, 2009, p. 125; Till, 2009, p. 126).

Renovation as a multi-sited spatial process

The thesis shows that the renovation at Siriusgatan was not only produced in the apartment or in the physical building. It was also produced through institutional, legal, economic, and communicative spaces: board rooms, consultation meetings, information letters, rent negotiations, valuation documents, tribunal hearings, appeal procedures, and media debates.

This is important for architectural representation. Conventional architectural drawings are able to show the physical intervention, but they are less able to show the process through which that intervention becomes possible and contested. By sequencing different spaces and materials, the graphic narrative made it possible to read the renovation as a spatial process distributed across domestic, institutional, legal, and economic settings.

In this sense, the thesis returns to Lefebvre's argument that space is socially produced. The transformation of the bathroom was shaped not only by material conditions, but by relations of authority, finance, law,

responsibility, and everyday life (LeFebvre, 1991, as cited in Till, 2009, p. 125). The graphic narrative made these relations part of the architectural field of view.

Technical necessity was entangled with property-economic logic

A central finding is that technical necessity and standard-raising upgrading were not clearly separated in the process. The renovation was framed through ageing infrastructure, moisture problems, and the need for pipe replacement. However, the empirical material also showed that the proposed technical solution was connected to standardised bathroom upgrades, expected rent increases, external valuations, return requirements, and the avoidance of financial write-downs.

This does not mean that the technical problems were irrelevant. Rather, the thesis shows that technical necessity became part of a wider property-economic structure. The issue was not only whether the buildings required intervention, but which kind of intervention was made reasonable, financially viable, and institutionally defensible.

This finding connects the case to broader research on Million Programme renovation. Such renovation

is often framed through technical necessity and long-term maintenance, but may also involve standard-raising measures, rent increases, and displacement pressures (Baeten et al., 2017, pp. 631–632, 636–638; Thörn et al., 2023a, pp. 10–12). The Siriusgatan case shows how these wider tendencies operate through concrete design and material decisions, such as whether bathrooms should be rebuilt with tiled walls and clinker floors or with a lower-cost alternative.

Tenant influence was formally present but structurally limited

The thesis also shows that tenant influence was present in formal terms, but limited in practice. Tenants received information, were asked for approval, participated in meetings, organised collectively, and were represented through the Swedish Union of Tenants and the legal process. However, the analysis shows that these forms of influence were structurally constrained.

Several decisive conditions appeared to be shaped before or outside the moments where tenants were invited to respond. Technical assessments, public procurement procedures, standardisation principles, investment decisions, rent assumptions, and legal frameworks shaped the scope of what could be discussed. Tenant participation therefore took place within

a process where important parameters were already decided.

This finding supports research on renovation governance as responsabilisation, where responsibility is distributed across institutional levels and ultimately placed partly on tenants themselves (Thörn & Polanska, 2023, pp. 212–213, 226–228). It also corresponds with research showing that legal and institutional processes often place tenants in a weak position in relation to landlords (Baeten et al., 2017, pp. 642–643, 647). The contribution of the graphic narrative is to make this structural imbalance readable as a spatial and temporal process: tenants are not only weaker because they have less power, but because they enter the process after many decisive factors have already been formed.

Affordability is a spatial consequence

Another key finding is that affordability must be understood as a spatial issue. In the empirical material, rent increases were not only described as financial pressure. They were connected to the ability to remain in the home, to everyday needs, to family life, to overcrowding, to displacement risk, and to the emotional security of housing.

Through the graphic narrative, affordability became visible as part of the spatial transformation itself. A renovated bathroom may appear as an improvement in technical or material terms, but if the associated rent increase threatens the tenant's ability to remain, the spatial meaning of the renovation changes. What is institutionally framed as upgrading may therefore be experienced as insecurity.

This finding connects the case to research on renoviction, displacement pressure, and tenant resistance in Swedish housing renovation (Polanska & Richard, 2018, pp. 423–429; Thörn et al., 2023c, p. 63). It also supports the thesis's spatial argument: affordability is not outside architecture. It shapes whether space can continue to be inhabited.

Municipal public housing contains an unresolved institutional tension

The thesis further shows that the conflict cannot be understood only as a disagreement between a landlord and tenants. It is also shaped by a structural tension within municipal public housing. Familjebostäder is a public housing company with social responsibilities, but it operates within legal and economic frameworks that require business-like principles and property-economic reasoning.

This institutional position allowed social responsibility to be acknowledged while economic calculations continued to structure the renovation process. Tenant hardship could be recognised, for example through phased rent increases, without necessarily changing the proposed intervention. Political actors could express responsibility for overall direction while distancing themselves from operational decisions. Legal institutions could recognise affordability as relevant while still giving priority to technical and property-economic rationality.

This finding directly connects the case to the societal context of a transformed Swedish public housing sector. The literature describes how *allmännyttan* has moved from welfare-oriented provision toward a more market-oriented and financialised role (Christophers, 2013, pp. 887–893; Hedin et al., 2012, pp. 443–446; Kadioğlu & Listerborn, 2025, pp. 5–7). The Siriusgatan case shows how this shift appears in practice: not as a single ideological statement, but through ordinary renovation decisions, valuation assumptions, legal procedures, and rent-setting structures.

Graphic storytelling as knowledge-making

The main representational contri-

bution of the thesis is to show how architectural graphic storytelling can function as a form of knowledge-making. Its value lies in connecting materials that are usually separated: legal documents, technical reports, board decisions, media statements, interviews, observations, and architectural drawings.

By organising these materials through analytical themes, spatial-temporal mapping, and narrative sequence, the thesis produced a more situated understanding of the renovation process. The graphic narrative made it possible to see not only what actors said, but how their positions related to specific spaces, moments, documents, and consequences.

This expands architectural representation. It suggests that architectural drawing can engage not only with form, material, and spatial outcome, but also with process, conflict, power, and lived consequence. In line with Till, this means moving beyond the false safety of architectural abstraction and engaging with the force fields through which architecture is actually produced (Till, 2009, pp. 87–88, 126). In line with Doucet, it also means treating storytelling as a critical practice that can help us notice relations and struggles that cleaner architectural narratives might obscure (Doucet, 2022, pp. 40, 44–46).

Final conclusion

The thesis concludes that architectural graphic storytelling can expand architectural representation by making contested spatial processes readable without reducing their complexity. In the case of Siriusgatan, it made visible how a bathroom renovation was produced through the interaction of technical necessity, standard-raising ambition, rent-setting, property valuation, legal authority, tenant mobilisation, and everyday vulnerability.

The contribution is therefore not only a graphic novel about one renovation case. It points to a way of working with architectural representation in situations where space is shaped by forces that conventional drawings often leave outside the frame. By tracing these forces visually and narratively, architectural graphic storytelling can create knowledge about how spatial change is produced, who is affected by it, and where its conflicts and inequalities become visible.

The graphic narrative does not solve the conflict. It does not replace legal, economic, technical, or political analysis. But it can bring these dimensions into relation and make them available for recognition, reflection, and dialogue. That is the critical potential of the work: to make the production of space visible enough to be questioned.

EPILOGUE

I began this thesis with Till's reminder that architecture is not a retreat from the world, but a way of standing within its force fields. At the beginning, this was a theoretical position. By the end, it had become a more personal lesson.

The process has allowed me to encounter stories of worry, fatigue, anger, attachment, and care—experiences that do not easily fit into plans, diagrams, or decisions, but nevertheless shape what architecture becomes. The renovation process was never only technical, legal, or economic; it was also lived, felt, and carried by people in their everyday lives.

This is what I take with me: the need to keep looking for the human being within the system. Not as an abstraction, not as a category, but as someone whose life is touched by decisions made elsewhere. For me, this may be one of architecture's most important responsibilities.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWEES

This appendix lists the anonymised interview participants who were interviewed as part of the empirical material. Some interviews are directly cited in the thesis, while others informed the contextual understanding of the case.

DIRECTLY CITED

Interviewee TUR1

Tenant Union Representative
Date: February 20, 2026
Format: In-person interview

Interviewee TUR2

Tenant Union Representatives
Date: February 3, 2026
Format: In-person group interview

CONTEXTUAL MATERIAL

Interviewee TUR3

Tenant Union Representative
Date: February 19, 2026
Format: Telephone interview

Interviewee LAR1

Landlord Representative
Date: February 20, 2026
Format: In-person interview

Interviewee LAR2

Landlord Representative
Date: February 24, 2026
Format: In-person interview

APPENDIX B

SELECTED EMPIRICAL EXCERPTS

This appendix contains selected empirical excerpts used in the analytical process. Many of these excerpts are reproduced in the graphic novel, while others are included to show how they informed the development of analytical themes, key tensions, and narrative structure.

TENANTS

TE 1. Rent increases are described as financially unsustainable in relation to already strained household economies.

TE1.1 “Bergsjön is a vulnerable area. Many large families with several children live on Siriusgatan. We cannot afford to pay more rent increases.” (Engelbrektson, 2022, “Namninsamling” section)

TE1.2 “I am a cleaner and start work at four o'clock. I am very tired and should be sleeping now, but I want to be here and protest against Familjebostäder. We asked how much they want to raise the rent, but they do not want to say.” (Löwendahl, 2022, opening section)

TE1.3 “Right now I pay 6,700 kronor. It is difficult because I am alone. I work as an assistant nurse in an elderly care home and I do not receive housing allowance.” (Löwendahl, 2022, “Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section)

TE1.4 “There are people who cry. People who may not have food to eat. Do you understand? People here do not earn 50,000. They may earn 15,000 after tax. How are they supposed to manage? Some only have one income, some do not work, some are pensioners.” (Löwendahl, 2022,

“Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section)

TE1.5 “It affects us very much. Everything is becoming very expensive. It will be very hard for us to stay.” (Löwendahl, 2023a, opening section)

TE1.6 “It is completely crazy that rents have risen so much in exactly these areas. I do not know how they are thinking. How are people supposed to survive? They really need to think again, because this is not possible.” (Löwendahl, 2023a, opening section)

TE1.7 “The rent is not something you can save on. You have to pay it.” (Löwendahl, 2023a, opening section)

TE1.8 “That was the right decision. It is good that they understand that people cannot afford it. Many were against it. It is not only rents that have become more expensive. Food and everything else have also become more expensive. Most people here have low incomes.” (Löwendahl, 2023b, “Inte bara hyrorna som blivit dyrare” section)

TE1.9 “It was a major victory, and it was a relief to hear. It has been really tough. Now we are going to celebrate on Sunday and invite the whole area and all the tenants.” (Löwendahl, 2023b, “Inte bara hyrorna som blivit dyrare” section)

TE 2. Rent increases are repeatedly linked to the risk of displacement, including downsizing, overcrowding, or forced relocation.

TE2.1 “People will be forced to take in lodgers, or move from three-room apartments to two-room apartments. Or move away completely and live somewhere else. The question is where.” (Löwendahl, 2022, “Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section)

TE2.2 “... has stated that he is worried that the renovation will lead to a higher rent. He believes the rent is already high and is worried that he will have to move because of the rent increase, as he does not have the financial means to remain.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 8)

TE2.3 “... has stated that he is satisfied with the apartment as it is. Nor will he be able to manage the rent increase that would become relevant after the renovation.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 8)

TE2.4 “In a survey among the affected households, two thirds of the more than 400 respondents stated that they would need to move if the rent was increased by a further 200 kronor.” (Terán Öman, 2023)

TE2.5 “The Northern Gothenburg Tenants’ Association conducted a survey among the more than 1,000 households on Siriusgatan. Of the more than 400 respondents, two thirds estimated that they would need to move if the rent increased by a further 200 kronor.” (Löwendahl, 2022, “Överraskade av de starka reaktionerna” section)

TE2.6 “... has lived in the building for 15 years and has an acceptable rent for his three-room apartment. But as a single father he has no margin for increased costs. Now he is afraid he will be forced to move if the rent becomes too high.” (Engelbrektson, 2022, opening section)

TE2.7 “I am not alone in being worried. Many low-income families live here who cannot handle several rent increases in a row.” (Engelbrektson, 2022, opening section)

TE3. The home is described as a last point of stability, and renovation-induced rent increases transform it into a condition of insecurity.

TE3.1 “We are people who already have difficulty living, both because of the economy and everything happening in the world. The only safe place was our home. And now that is under threat. People cannot afford to pay.” (Löwendahl, 2023b, “Inte bara

hyrorna som blivit dyrare” section)

TE4. Tenants distinguish between necessary maintenance and rent-generating standard increases, accepting the former but contesting the latter.

TE4.1 “Now they want to renovate the bathroom. And we have said: if you want to replace the pipes, of course, but the rest should not happen at our expense. It feels as if they just want an excuse to keep raising the rents.” (Löwendahl, 2022, “Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section)

TE4.2 “The tenants accept that there is a maintenance need, but question the need for standard-raising measures.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 6–7)

TE4.3 “Standard-raising measures are not justified from the point of view of residents, nor justified in relation to the significant rent increase that will be added to the increase that already burdens the tenants due to the facade renovation.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 7–8)

TE4.4 “The tenants would rather keep rents down and think that half-tiled bathrooms and vinyl flooring are enough.” (Engelbrektson, 2022, “Kakel och klinkers” section)

TE5. What is defined institutionally as improvement is often experienced by tenants as unnecessary, inappropriate, or even as a reduction of usability.

TE5.1 “His bathroom has no window. He questions the need to renovate the bathroom in his apartment since there is no moisture damage in connection with his bathroom. He has no problem with his bathroom. It works perfectly. It feels unfair that he should get a higher rent for something he does not see as a standard increase. Nothing will become better for him.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 8)

TE5.2 “He has no possibility of moving because of illness. The pipes in his bathroom are new. His bathtub is new. A bathtub is important for a person suffering from rheumatism and he really needs his bathtub. His bathroom works excellently. For a person who is poor, no optimal standard is required.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 8–9)

TE5.3 “The tenants also dispute that tiles and clinker can extend the life span of the bathrooms. In addition, the floor will become colder with clinker, especially during the winter. Colder floors are not experienced as a higher standard by the tenants.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 6–7)

TE5.4 “Many tenants, especially families with children, will miss their bath tubs.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 7)

TE5.5 “The tenants particularly object to the bathroom being fully tiled. Today there is vinyl flooring, which has been shown to have a similar lifespan to the bathroom pipes if continuous maintenance is carried out. In addition, it is cheaper to install. The main reason why tenants in the property, and tenants in general, are likely to want vinyl flooring in the bathroom is that it is not as cold as clinker, which conducts heat. In the properties in question there are many families with children, and then a cold bathroom floor is a problem.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 10–11)

TE5.6 “... then he just stood up and shouted, ‘WE DO NOT WANT A DAMN MERCEDES,’ right at him. And everyone was so furious, the whole room felt on the verge of revolt. ... People fare-dodge, you know, at Nymånegatan, and if ticket inspectors show up, half of them jump off. People cannot even afford a tram pass. And then he comes in talking about a Mercedes.” (TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026)

TE6. Consultation processes are experienced as one-directional information rather than genuine dialogue or influence.

TE6.1 “... believes that better dialogue would benefit all parties, including the property owner. The landlord is not the enemy, he points out. They are welcome to fix things. But at the same time they cannot just raise the rent however they want. They are responsible, and we live here. We can talk. Why should we be in court when we can handle it ourselves? Unfortunately, someone who has no idea how people live is deciding things without talking to us. That is stupid.” (Löwendahl, 2023b, “Efterlyser störelsehyrdhet hos hyresvärderna” section)

TE6.2 “The tenants object to the landlord’s claim that consultation meetings have taken place. That is definitely not a correct description of the meetings arranged by the landlord. The landlord appeared at these information meetings and unilaterally declared that this was the lowest level the landlord could accept and that all tenants had to accept it, and thereafter explained that they were open to discussing different optional upgrades. There was no room for discussion or exchange of views regarding the lowest level of standard increases. The tenants were overridden and the landlord did not listen to the tenants’ proposals or needs.

Thus, there was no consultation in the true meaning of the word.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 7–8)

TE6.3 “The tenants confirm that there were meetings with Familjebostäder, but question whether this amounted to any real consultation before the renovation. Familjebostäder came to the meetings with what they said was a minimum level and were only willing to talk about which optional upgrades would be possible. The tenants’ real opportunities to influence were therefore extremely limited.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 10–11)

TE7. Sequential and overlapping rent increases create cumulative financial pressure and a sense of being misled.

TE7.1 “A shared subjective tenant interest in these three cases is that the tenants have already been affected by major rent increases through recently completed renovations. In connection with those renovations, many were encouraged by the landlord to make expensive optional choices, which they now regret because it will be difficult to afford them due to additional standard increases and the annual rent increases that are now relevant. No one had expected all these increases to come at the same time. It is not right that the ten-

ants should bear this miscalculation.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 6–7)

TE7.2 “The tenants feel deceived into first voluntarily agreeing to a number of optional upgrades and then shortly afterwards being forced to accept additional standard increases they did not request.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 7)

TE7.3 “Before the facade renovation, the tenants were informed about what the work would involve and that there was an opportunity to choose optional upgrades, such as an enclosed balcony, in exchange for a further increase in rent. Nothing was said at those meetings about it also becoming relevant to renovate indoors and that such a renovation would entail additional rent increases.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 10–11)

TE7.4 “The facade renovation meant a rent increase of almost 15% for the tenants and the phasing-in of that rent is still ongoing.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 10–11)

TE8. Tenants remain not because of neighbourhood quality, but because rent levels still make living possible.

TE8.1 “We do not live here because

we like it very much. There are drugs everywhere, for example. You do not want your children here. But we live here because the rent is reasonable.” (Löwendahl, 2022, “Svårt att ha råd trots jobb” section)

TE8.2 “On Siriusgatan, the median income is 171,500 kronor a year, almost half of the average in Gothenburg. In the spring, all rents in municipal housing were raised by 4.25 percent, and the previously mentioned facade renovation on Siriusgatan has already led to a monthly rent increase of 750 kronor.” (Terán Öman, 2023)

TE9. Housing costs directly affect tenants’ ability to meet basic everyday needs such as food, transport, and clothing.

TE9.1 “... takes out frozen coriander, sighs over how expensive food has become. He admits that he often rides the tram without paying to save money. He has deprioritised winter boots for himself; his sneakers will have to do even if his toes get cold.” (Löwendahl, 2023a, opening section)

LANDLORD

LA1. Renovation is framed as a technical necessity due to ageing infrastructure and material conditions.

LA1.1 “We looked at the needs and

made a decision about pipe replacement. That also means that we will renovate the bathrooms in the building.” (Engelbrektson, 2022, “Kakel och klinkers” section)

LA1.2 “The buildings were built in the early 1970s and require renovation.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2020, Technical investigation, p. 2)

LA1.3 “In connection with the ongoing exterior renovation, mould growth has been discovered in the wall construction adjacent to the bathrooms.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2020, p. 1)

LA1.4 “To fully remediate the mould growth, we need to demolish the interior walls, including tiles, chipboard, plastic and timber studs, and build new walls without organic materials.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2020, Technical investigation, p. 4)

LA1.5 “A pipe renovation is necessary.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 5)

LA2. Fully tiled bathrooms are presented as the only rational, durable, and professionally accepted solution.

LA2.1 “We really do not see that there are any alternatives other than choosing tiles and clinker. It has to last for many tenants in the future.

That is the standard we normally always have.” (Löwendahl, 2022, “Överaskade av de starka reaktionerna” section)

LA2.2 “In the industry, it is still standard to renovate bathrooms with wall tiles and floor clinker.” (Löwendahl, 2023b, “Två olika besked om badrumsrenovering i samma område” section)

LA2.3 “Our position is that wall tiles and floor clinker have a longer lifespan than vinyl flooring and wet-room wallpaper.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 5)

LA2.4 “The landlord seeks long-term materials.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, pp. 5–6)

LA2.5 “According to practice, it is also most rational and sustainable from a property perspective to fully tile and lay clinker in bathrooms.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 5)

LA3. Standard-raising renovation is financially structured around rent increases, without which the project becomes unviable.

LA3.1 “The standard increase that bathrooms with tiles and clinker imply, and the resulting rent increase, is a decisive part of the project economy.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 2)

LA3.2 “Alternative execution with vinyl flooring would mean write-downs. ... For stage 1, write-downs would be approximately 24,000,000 kronor if no bathrooms are allowed tiles and clinker.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 8)

LA3.3 “Without the appeal, the investment decision falls and we need to start over.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024b, p. 2)

LA4. Renovation decisions are shaped by asset valuation, return requirements, and the avoidance of financial write-downs.

LA4.1 “Development of the value of the properties takes place from both an economic and a technical perspective. The economic perspective means that the market value of our properties is to be maintained, which is mainly influenced by the market’s return requirements and the development of rental income.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, n.d.-a, “Ekonomisk hållbarhet” section)

LA4.2 “Estimated total production cost is approximately 78,000,000 kronor. The project achieves 5.4 percent profitability, and the direct yield is 3.43 percent. The properties have been externally valued to assess any need for write-down after the pro-

posed interior renovation. The valuation is based on a rent increase of 750 kronor per month for all bathrooms. If the rent negotiation were to result in a rent increase lower than 600 kronor per month for bathrooms, there is a need for write downs.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2022, p. 1)

LA4.3 “Project economy in the investment decision is based on rent increases being charged for the standard-raising measures. The decision also relies on income from optional upgrades.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 7)

LA5. Uniform standardisation is framed as a matter of equality, attractiveness, and consistency across the housing stock.

LA5.1 “We think it is also an equality issue, that it should be just as good to live there as anywhere else in Gothenburg.” (Löwendahl, 2023b, “Två olika besked om badrumsrenovering i samma område” section)

LA5.2 “From an equality perspective, it is important that Bergsjön is not given a different solution than other parts of our housing stock.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 9)

LA5.3 “... we want it to be just as nice regardless of which neighbourhood you live in.” (Familjebostäder i Göte-

borg AB, n.d.-b, “Varför klinker och kakel i badrummen?” section)

LA5.4 “Our assessment is that a modern standard, especially in bathrooms, makes apartments attractive in a way that tenants generally expect.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 7)

LA5.5 “Then a representative from the landlord came to one of the consultation meetings up there. He was going to explain this idea of standard increase, and he thought he was being pedagogical, so he said something like, ‘if you have an old Volvo and then get a Mercedes instead, it becomes a little more expensive.’ As if, right now you have a shabby bathroom, but you are going to get a ‘Mercedes’ bathroom, a nicer bathroom. Then of course it becomes a bit more expensive because the standard is higher.” (TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026)

LA5.6 “The company shall strive to ensure that, within the group, attractive and high-quality housing, let as rental housing, is offered to different types of housing consumers. A broad range of housing, with great freedom of choice regarding size, standard, price level, and location, shall be pursued. One-sided forms of tenure increase segregation. The company shall therefore contribute to creating a city with mixed housing and ten-

ure forms.” (City of Gothenburg, n.d., Chapter 2, § 4, p. 3)

LA6. Renovation is positioned as a tool for broader area development, social regulation, and territorial transformation.

LA6.1 “The overall goals for the Gärdsås development are to increase attractiveness, safety, and welfare.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2022, p. 1)

LA6.2 “The interior renovation provides an opportunity to address problems such as unlawful subletting and overcrowding because mobility increases and we gain insight into who lives in the apartments.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2022, p. 3)

LA7. Project design is constrained by public procurement procedures, internal approval processes, and interdependent decision chains.

LA7.1 “When all bathrooms are renovated to the same standard, it gives cost-efficient procurement, a uniform and cost-efficient management.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 5)

LA7.2 “The starting point of the project has been that all bathrooms are carried out with uniform standard-raising measures. That has been

both the technical and the economic starting point.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 6)

LA7.3 “If there is a bigger change in the project, it may mean that the procurement has to be redone.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 6)

LA7.4 “The company has in the project carried out procurement and signed a conditional agreement with the contractor. It is a long chain of activities and decisions in projects that depend on each other.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 6)

LA8. Tenant hardship is recognised but addressed through phased rent increases rather than reduced intervention.

LA8.1 “We understand that it is stressful for our tenants to receive high rent increases when we renovate. And we understand how much disposable income there is. We are prepared to go far in phasing in rents.” (Löwendahl, 2024, “Överväger att trappa in hyror långsammare” section)

LA8.2 “The stepwise model is of great benefit to most people, as the increase is phased in over many years.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 7)

LA8.3 “The effect of giving rent rebates in the form of phasing-in has significantly less impact on project economy than refraining from rent adjustments for standard increases.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 7)

LA8.4 “We have two paths to take. Appeal or allow the decision to become final. If we do not appeal, the investment decision falls and we need to start over from the beginning. Regardless of the choice, there will be delays of approximately one year. At the board meeting, we will present the background of the project, the judgment, the current investment matter, changes in return requirements and the surrounding context, the finances, and the conclusion. My proposal is to appeal, give the tenants long rent phase-ins (12 years), and maintain the model for tiles and clinker.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024b, p. 2)

LA9. Communication shortcomings are acknowledged after conflict emerges rather than shaping the project from the outset.

LA9.1 “There have been shortcomings in the way we communicated, which we have learned from.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024b, p. 4)

LA9.2 “We need to communicate in several languages, explain what can and cannot be influenced, and start dialogue and conversations at an early stage.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024b, p. 4)

LA9.3 “We have also made mistakes. We need to be responsive and humble.” (Löwendahl, 2024, “Överväger att trappa in hyror långsammare” section)

LA10. Tenant approval is presented by the landlord as a formal requirement, rather than as a stage of meaningful project negotiation.

LA10.1 “Approval of the measures: In order to carry out the measures, we need your approval. If we do not receive your approval, Familjebostäder will submit an application to the Rent and Tenancy Tribunal requesting permission to carry out the measures.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2023, p. 8)

LA10.2 “In all our activities, dialogue with both tenants and Gothenburg residents is central. For us, it is self-evident to listen to the tenants —it is their homes and their living environments that we work in. Our service is characterised by proximity, openness and cooperation.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, n.d.-c, “Vårt uppdrag” section)

LA10.3 “Many homes are in need of refurbishment and energy-efficiency improvements. In connection with refurbishment and renovation, the tenants shall be involved in a dialogue. The ambition is that tenants should not have to leave their homes due to social transformation and cost increases.” (City of Gothenburg, n.d., Chapter 2, § 6, p. 3)

TENANT UNION

TU1. Collective organisation and visible mobilisation enable tenants to exert influence in the renovation process.

TU1.1 “That ruling is unusual, but at the same time it shows that it really can pay off to fight back. I believe the tribunal’s decision was strongly influenced by the fact that a majority of tenants protested and opposed the renovation plans in different ways.” (The Swedish Union of Tenants, 2023, para. 6)

TU1.2 “There were many active tenants spreading the information that you have the right to say no. Many are otherwise afraid; they think they can be evicted or punished.” (Terán Öman, 2023, final section)

TU1.3 “The landlords have lots of resources, but we are not powerless either. If we raise our voices, they

have to take us into account. So one should not underestimate the power of organising.” (Terán Öman, 2023, final section)

TU1.4 “Nearly 230 people in the area also signed a petition asking to be spared yet another rent increase as a result of renovation.” (Löwendahl, 2022, “Överraskade av de starka reaktionerna” section)

TU1.5 “In drizzling rain and darkness, around a hundred tenants marched through the courtyards on Siriusgatan on Thursday evening. Many carried laminated signs: ‘No more rent increases’, ‘No rent increase for necessary maintenance’, ‘Familjebostäder: Listen to the tenants’, and ‘We want reuse’.” (Löwendahl, 2022, opening section)

TU2. Formal tenant influence rights only become effective when they are actively translated, organised, and made accessible.

TU2.1 “The rule is that you should have the right to influence, and that is part of why we want this agreement, especially with public housing companies.” (TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026)

TU2.2 “When we hear about a renovation, we invite members to a meeting. Negotiators explain what this will

mean for your rent and what the process will look like. We have organisers who explain how you as a tenant can engage. A lawyer is also there to explain what rights you have in the process. You have the right to influence. You have the right to approve, or not approve.” (TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026)

TU2.3 “One or two tenants contacted us directly and started cases. Then we had a local association with a very engaged member who took responsibility, because not everyone in that property understands Swedish. So she took responsibility for making sure that we reached people. We need to reach people, we need to knock on doors.” (TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026)

TU3. Participation is constrained by fear, pressure from landlords, and limited understanding of legal processes.

TU3.1 “As a rule, landlords put a lot of pressure on people to sign. And several did during the process. They submitted the application to the tribunal, and then it became even more concrete: ‘shit, I have to go to the tribunal.’ You are worried about your tenancy contract, you do not fully understand the process, and we have not reached out with the information saying that you do not risk your tenancy contract and that it costs nothing.” (TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026)

ing.” (TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026)

TU4. The legal separation between renovation approval and rent setting makes affordability difficult to articulate and defend.

TU4.1 “The problem with the whole process is that the rent increase and the approval are two separate issues, so they are not tried together. What is decided is whether the measures are reasonable, not whether the rent increase is reasonable.” (TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026)

TU4.2 “When tenants are asked why they do not agree, they say: the rent is too high. We understand that one hundred percent, but then we need to work out whether there are other reasons too, because in the legal balancing that helps.” (TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026)

TU5. Conflict intensifies when new renovation measures are introduced on top of already ongoing rent increases.

TU5.1 “It was also the combination that, first there were high annual increases, and then they had just had the facade renovations that led to rent increases. And some had made optional choices in that process be-

cause they had the finances for it. And then, from nowhere, this came. Yet another increase.” (TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026)

TU5.2 “It became very concrete that this is going to go badly for people.” (TUR2, personal communication, February 3, 2026)

TU6. Affordability pressure is described as forcing tenants to imagine or resort to harmful survival strategies beyond the housing sphere.

TU6.1 “I have had people from there say: if they raise it that much, then I will have to start selling my body, because I cannot think of any other way to support myself.” (TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026)

TU6.2 “There are such contrasts. At the same time Familjebostäder is very active in projects to fight crime and prevent vulnerable areas. But they do not understand that if you cannot afford the rent, then maybe, as many said, ‘my mother was a single parent, I got so upset seeing her struggle with the rent, not even having enough food at the end of the month, she was hungry, so I started selling drugs to help my mother.’” (TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026)

TU7. Extended legal processes reduce visible mobilisation while prolonging uncertainty and insecurity.

TU7.1 “The twelve-year phasing-in helps a little, of course. But there was also a dip in activism. A very long time passed between the tribunal’s decision and the Court of Appeal’s decision. People moved.” (TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026)

TU7.2 “I think the worry remains.” (TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026)

LEGAL SYSTEM

LE1. The legal framework positions the landlord as the primary authority in technical and economic decision-making.

LE1.1 “The application shall be approved if the landlord has a considerable interest in the measure being carried out and it is not unreasonable against the tenant that it is carried out.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 11)

LE1.2 “According to established practice, it is for the landlord as property owner to make the technical and property-economic assessments that determine the extent of the improve-

ment and alteration measures.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 12)

LE1.3 “The landlord also determines how the measures are to be carried out.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 12)

LE2. Affordability is recognised as a relevant tenant interest, but is treated as one factor within a broader legal balancing framework.

LE2.1 “In the assessment of whether the measure is unreasonable against the tenant, the landlord’s interest shall be weighed against the interests tenants in general may be assumed to have in the measure not being carried out.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 11)

LE2.2 “Avoiding rent increases has in the preparatory works been stated to be a relevant tenant interest.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15)

LE2.3 “The larger the rent increase a measure can be assumed to cause, the stronger the reasons the landlord should be able to show in order to carry out the measure.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15)

LE2.4 “An additional relevant interest

is the interest that tenants’ housing costs do not become unjustifiably high.” (Government Bill 2001/02:41, p. 25)

LE3. The tribunal gives priority to tenant affordability and vulnerability over standardised upgrading.

LE3.1 “The Rent and Tenancy Tribunal considers that the measures may lead to rent levels that, taken together, would be unreasonable for the 35 tenants who have not approved the measures.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15)

LE3.2 “Fifteen of these have said that they do not have the means to remain in their apartments and would have to move.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15)

LE3.3 “The Tenancy Act is protective legislation. It is not reasonable that tenants, as the weaker party, should be forced to accept a standard increase they cannot financially bear.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 16)

LE3.4 “The landlord has not shown that it has such a considerable interest in carrying out the measures that outweighs the interest tenants in general may be assumed to have in the measures not being carried out.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of

Gothenburg, 2023, p. 16)

LE3.5 “When the landlord wishes to carry out a measure that can be assumed to lead to a substantial rent increase, and which goes beyond what normal and appropriate property management requires, the tenant’s interest in the rent not being increased may then outweigh the landlord’s interest in the measure being carried out.” (Government Bill 2001/02:41, p. 25)

LE4. The Court of Appeal reasserts the primacy of technical and property-economic rationality.

LE4.1 “It has not emerged that the landlord’s choice of method is governed by other than technically and property-economic rational reasons.” (Svea Court of Appeal, 2024, p. 7)

LE4.2 “The landlord therefore has a considerable interest in tiling the walls and laying clinker on the floors in the bathrooms.” (Svea Court of Appeal, 2024, p. 7)

LE4.3 “The choice of tiles and clinker cannot be considered to go beyond what normal and appropriate property management requires.” (Svea Court of Appeal, 2024, pp. 7–8)

LE5. The legal process reveals contradictions between formal consultation rights and predetermined project logic.

LE5.1 “A property owner may ... carry out such standard-raising measures on the property as have a more than insignificant effect on the utility value of a residential apartment For such measures to be carried out, they must have been approved by the affected residential tenants, or the Rent and Tenancy Tribunal must have granted permission for the measures.” (Swedish Land Code, 1970, Chapter 12, Section 18 d)

LE5.2 “If the landlord wishes to carry out such measures as referred to in Section 18 d, the landlord shall notify the affected residential tenants of this in writing. If an affected residential tenant does not approve the measure, the landlord may apply to the Rent and Tenancy Tribunal for permission to carry out the measure. Such an application may be made no earlier than two months after notice was given to the tenant.” (Swedish Land Code, 1970, Chapter 12, Section 18 e)

LE5.3 “The tribunal questions how a municipal housing company can carry out procurement before consultation has taken place and approval has been obtained from the tenants

or issued by the tribunal. The consultation and balancing of interests intended by the legislator would then become mere window dressing.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15)

LE6. Claims of technical necessity are not neutral but contested within the legal process.

LE6.1 “The tribunal is of the opinion that a wet room does not become tighter or safer with clinker compared to vinyl flooring. It is the sealing layer behind the tiles that is decisive.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 14)

LE6.2 “There are no statistics or scientific evidence that there are more water damages in vinyl floors than in clinker.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 14)

LE6.3 “In this case there is reason to make a different assessment than usual concerning the significance that a possible rent increase should be given in the balancing of interests.” (Rent and Tenancy Tribunal of Gothenburg, 2023, p. 15)

LE7. Municipal housing is legally structured through businesslike principles, allowing market-oriented logics to shape renovation decisions.

LE7.1 “A municipally owned public housing company shall conduct its operations in accordance with businesslike principles, notwithstanding Chapter 2, Sections 6 and 7 of the Local Government Act (2017:725).” (Act on Public Municipal Housing Companies, 2010, Section 2)

LE7.2 “Municipalities and regions may not charge fees higher than those corresponding to the costs of the services or utilities they provide.” (Local Government Act, 2017, Chapter 2, Section 6)

LE7.3 “Municipalities and regions may conduct business activities, provided that they are carried out without a profit motive and aim to provide public utility facilities or services to members.” (Local Government Act, 2017, Chapter 2, Section 7)

POLITICIANS

PO1. Political actors present themselves as responsible for overall direction while distancing themselves from the concrete operational decisions that produce tenant conflict.

PO1.1 “It is not the board’s role to micromanage that. The company saw a need to appeal and obtain guidance, and you have to ask them about the details. The board has chosen not to

intervene in that. We stay with the more strategic, overarching questions.” (Löwendahl, 2024, “Unikt beslut stoppade kakel och golvklinkers” section)

PO1.2 “Politically, we see it as our task to set the more strategic direction for the company. To make sure the company carries out its renovation plan, and returns to us on how this can have as little economic impact on tenants as possible.” (Löwendahl, 2024, “Renovering är upp till värden” section)

PO1.3 “But then came the blow: the politicians chose to appeal. They blamed the civil servants, and the civil servants blamed the politicians. But it was in fact a political decision, although one recommended by the civil servants.” (TUR1, personal communication, February 20, 2026)

PO1.4 “The board decides to appeal the decision of the Rent and Tenancy Tribunal, Case No. H 2971-2973-23, 2023-12-06, concerning Siriusgatan 54-58, 66, 68-70.” (Familjebostäder i Göteborg AB, 2024a, p. 1)

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