



Narratives of a Fractured Trust in the Swedish Model: Tenants' Emotions of Renovation

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Abstract

Research shows there is a current wave of housing renovation in Swedish cities, where private as well as public rental housing companies use “renoviction,” or displacement through renovation, as a profit-driven strategy. This article focuses on emotions and renoviction, in particular the emotions of tenants currently facing forced renovations, in Sweden. We discuss how power is reproduced and questioned, and illustrate methods used by housing companies to carry out extensive renovation. The following questions have guided our analysis: What kinds of emotions are evoked among tenants experiencing an extensive, top-down and costly renovation? What particular injustices and violations are identified by the tenants in this situation? How can these violations be understood in relation to the current housing policy? Our research is qualitative and builds on semi-structured interviews with tenants as well as extensive ethnographic work in a neighborhood undergoing renovation, followed by steeply increased rents. We use the metaphor of “fractured trust” to conceptualize the emotional reaction of tenants, and argue that citizens’ trust in the Swedish welfare system is being broken locally, in the wake of ongoing top-down renovation processes, by use of a rationality that does not take into consideration tenants’ perspectives and needs. We conclude that anxiety, angst, anger, and loss, attached together in a common feeling of shock, were the most prevalent emotions expressed and were described by tenants as a response to unfair treatment. In the interviews, a complex set of violations performed by the housing company in a renoviction neighborhood is brought to the forefront here, and set in this context of systemic violence exerted against tenants in contemporary Sweden.

Keywords: emotions, renovation, displacement, tenants, violations, housing, Sweden

Polanska, Dominika V. & Åse Richard: “Narratives of Fractured Trust in the Swedish Model: Tenants Emotions of Renovation”, *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 1, 2019: 141–164. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se>

Introduction

The national housing regime is regarded as a cornerstone of Sweden's welfare politics. This model, introduced in the country after the Second World War, is internationally distinguished for its universality and egalitarian approach, such as its high percentage of public housing, strong tenants' rights, and exceptionally good standard in housing. The "Swedish model" is often referred to when describing universalistic welfare policies dating back to the 1930s and the post-war period of social democratic rule, industrialization, and wealth growth in the country. From that period and "up to the 1970s the Swedish Model was regarded as something successful and progressive with regard to the economic and social development of a mixed economy" (Lundberg 1985: 1). Sweden became a people's home, *Folkhemmet*, guided by ideas of solidarity and universalism, with the vision of creating a society based on ideas of "a home, or family, in which national solidarity would prevail and all members and different classes would gain from the state's universalistic social policy" (Hajighasemi 2004: 97). The model culminated in the Million Programme (*Miljonprogrammet*), which set out in the mid-60s, to remedy the Swedish housing shortage in only ten years, through the construction of a million state-subsidized dwellings. This was followed by the multicultural citizenship model in 1975, with an ambition to guarantee inclusive citizenship, even for non-citizens, covering most social, civil, and political rights (Schierup and Ålund 2011).

Today, the situation of residents in the housing stock of the 1960s and 1970s is problematic. Tenants experience the consequences of at least three decades of deregulation, resulting in a situation described by researchers as "the end of Swedish exceptionalism" (Schierup and Ålund 2011), along with high levels of residential segregation (Scarpa 2015), the racialization of urban space (Molina 1998), and an end to "the era of Social Democratic hegemony" following the election of a center-right government from 2006-14 (Larsson *et al.* 2012: 4). Scholars observe that "neoliberal politics have rapidly transformed the provision of housing, exacerbating the impacts of increasing income inequality" (Hedin *et al.* 2012: 460), and that housing in Sweden has turned into a "monstrous hybrid" of regulation and neoliberal components (Christophers 2013). Recent studies stress that this current turn in the national housing policy, with the introduction of legislation allowing for business-like principles in the running of municipal housing companies, has potentially set off processes of large-scale displacement (Baeten and Listerborn 2015). Today, we can see the consequences: deepening segregation in Swedish cities, increasing displacement of low-income households, the creation of "urban nomads" (people moving several times as a consequence of renovations and raised rents), along with growing discontent among tenants (Boverket 2014, Lind *et al.* 2016, Westin 2011).

We argue that the narratives of tenants are lacking in the public debate on

housing, and we seek to explore how these changes in housing policy play out on the ground, on an individual and neighborhood scale, with a special interest in the emotions expressed by affected tenants in the early stages of the renovation process and how these are understood and narrated by tenants. Looking back, early sociology studies tend to categorize emotions as mostly negative and derogatory. Emotions were, in Western philosophical thought, often deemed childish and unreasonable and in juxtaposition with rationality (Turner 2009). Following Negt and Kluge (1993), shedding light on how private experiences are deemed unimportant and seen as undesirable in capitalist regimes, we argue that emotions and lived experiences of renovation processes are systematically being excluded from the public debate on housing and Swedish housing policy. Thus, our ambition is to analyze how the particular Swedish housing regime interplays with occurrences on the ground. And we do this by studying emotions evoked in a neighborhood experiencing *displacement pressure*, a term referring to pressure put on households in an area undergoing displacement (Marcuse 1985). Emotions are defined as constructed socially, culturally, and politically (Hochschild 1979, 1990, Flam 2005), and our inquiry probes into how these are fostered and affected in addition to questioning and challenging general and particular ruptures. We discuss how power is reproduced and questioned, and illustrate the tactics used by housing companies to carry out large-scale top-down renovation projects. The following questions have guided our analysis:

- What kinds of emotions are evoked among tenants undergoing a costly renovation?
- What particular injustices and violations are identified by the tenants in this situation?
- How can these violations be understood in relation to the current housing policy?

Our research is qualitative and concerns housing, with a special interest in emotions expressed by tenants in neighborhoods undergoing renovation followed by a considerable rent increase. To date, in Sweden, as well as internationally, few studies of displacement have focused explicitly on the lived and emotional experience of those directly affected, despite a recent increase in interest (Baeten et al. 2017, Baeten and Listerborn 2015, Polanska and Richard 2018, Pull and Richard *forthcoming*, Westin 2011). Our study builds upon unique empirical material from an early stage of the renovation process of one specific area: the Gränby neighborhood, located in Uppsala, north of Stockholm. Gränby was built during the Million Programme in the late-1960s and beginning of the 1970s and was, at the time of our study, mainly occupied by low-income households of various ethnic backgrounds and levels of education. Apart from rental housing, amounting to 60 percent of the stock, Gränby consists of owner-occupied apartments as well as

privately owned single-family housing. Prior to the renovations, there were 1,400 households in the rental housing stock of the neighborhood, all of which at the time of our interviews were to be subjected to large-scale renovations (including the renovation of bathrooms, kitchens, ventilation, plumbing, and so on), with an initial plan to subsequently raise rents up to 43 percent. Since then, considerable relocation has taken place, but also resistance (Baeten et al. 2017, Mauritz 2016, Polanska and Richard 2018, Söderqvist 2012).

Our empirical material is unique as we interviewed tenants at the very beginning of the renovation process, collecting voices from those often neglected in displacement and gentrification research (Atkinson 2015, Slater 2006). The study consists of 31 semi-structured interviews and several years of ethnographic work in the area (2011-18). The interviews were conducted in 2011-12 and the selection was guided by the interviewees' personal experiences of renovation and are numbered 1 to 31. That is, interviewees were purposefully chosen (based on personal knowledge and recommendations by others) as they were expected to give a rich picture of the phenomenon studied: personal accounts of having experienced forced renovation. The interviewees consisted of 24 women and 14 men, all residents of the rental housing stock in Gränby. The youngest interviewee was 21 years old while the oldest was around 80, and in total 38 persons were interviewed. The ethnographic part of the study consisted of participant observation; the collection of photographs, notes, and media reports; and a large number of informal talks in Gränby, but also in adjacent neighborhoods subjected to renovation. The aim of the research project became apparent during the process, as strong emotions were expressed throughout the material when the interviewees were asked about their experiences. Tenants expressed strong emotions as well as vivid descriptions of physical reactions caused by the renovation plans. The interviews encompass themes like descriptions of the neighborhood, the experience of the situation, specific feelings and responses, along with the tenants' perception of the future and the past. In the beginning of our study, tenants faced a rent increase proposal of 43 percent; however, due to massive collective protests, the final rent increase was confined to a range of 18 to 34 percent.

In the next section, previous research on emotions studying displacement in Sweden will be presented. We draw upon current discussions, claiming that displacement research tends to present abstract conceptualizations, ignoring the emotional dimension of the phenomenon at hand. Our theoretical framework and the importance of emotional sociology is introduced and highlighted. We introduce the concept of *emotional regimes* and argue that power relations are inherent in emotional expressions, shaping the way these are communicated and articulated at the same time as the emotional regimes are embedded in culture. The emotions expressed in the interviews are analyzed with the help of a *fracture*

metaphor in order to understand how current housing policies are breaking the trust in the Swedish welfare system (including the state and institutions) among the tenants. Fracture is defined as the act of breaking or a state of being broken, demonstrated by the emotions distinguished in our material. However, the metaphor of a fracture is not fixed and leaves room for improvement and recovery. Thus, we believe that trust can be damaged but also recovered.

Housing, displacement and emotions: previous research

The universality and egalitarian approach of the Swedish housing regime, encompassing a high percentage of public housing, strong tenants' rights, and an exceptionally good housing standard, have been important in forming expectations on the functioning of the housing market in the country. Rapid national deregulation, initiated in the 1990s (Hedin *et al.* 2012), paved way for the current ongoing large-scale renovations, or displacement by renovation, in rental housing areas set in motion by private as well as public housing companies (Baeten *et al.* 2017). Molina and Westin warned in 2012, that new legislation encouraging municipal housing companies to be run according to "business-like principles" opened them up to, and legitimized, projects "that dramatically increase rents and cause displacement of low-income households" (2012: 5). Today, tenants in Sweden have very little to formally act upon regarding the scope and performance of renovations in their neighborhood and homes, and thereby just marginal possibilities to influence their rent (cf. Westin 2011). Governmental reports declare that current renovations result in socioeconomically vulnerable tenants moving to poorer neighborhoods, thus increasing housing segregation in the country (Boverket 2014). Adding to this, a fresh study from Uppsala shows that the renovations cause residents to suffer from an increase in poor mental health and weakened place attachment (Mauritz 2016).

There is a significant body of literature in environmental psychology on place attachment, exploring, among other things, how humans are embedded in their places of residence, and what role stability or disruptions play in their attachment (Brown and Perkins 1992, Brown *et al.* 2003). The focus on place attachment is dominating the field of studies on turnover and displacement (Altman and Low 1992, Bailey and Livingstone 2007, Bailey *et al.* 2012), and the health issues and wellbeing of residents connected to processes of displacement and place attachment are explored in that research (Davidson 2009, Fullilove 1996, Manzo 2014). Our ambition is to add to this body of research by focusing on the emotional dimension of displacement processes staged in the current Swedish context where housing policy, after decades of rapid deregulation, is shaping a hard-to-handle system of state regulation and market-orientation (Christophers 2013).

Inner-city renewal projects, reaching most Swedish municipalities during a period from the late-1950s to the mid-1970s, followed traditional gentrification patterns and caused a steep increase in displacement (Selander 1975, Thörn 2013, Gullberg 1998, Vidén and Reppen 2006). During the 1980s, state-initiated programs for renovation of rental housing led to a marked increase in the displacement of dwellers (Wiktorin 1989). And, in the 1990s, psychological studies concluded displacement, both temporal and permanent, severely affected elderly people and caused emotional disruptions such as stress, mistrust, powerlessness, self-estrangement, and a feeling of having been violated (Danermark and Ekström 1993, Ekström 1994). Since the clearance of inner-cities between the 1950s and 1970s, today's wave of renovations is one of the most extensive so-far, covering the large housing stock built during the Million Programme. Thus, displacement is once again on the rise in Sweden (Boverket 2014), and only a few critical studies have been found to focus on the experiences of displaced residents, their emotions, and perceptions of violations (Baeten et al. 2017, Baeten and Listerborn 2015, Mauritz 2016, Polanska and Richard 2018, Pull and Richard forthcoming, Westin 2011).

Displacement has been defined as “what happens when forces outside the household make living there impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable” (Hartman *et al.* 1982, quoted in Slater 2009: 295), and is a process reported to have severe and negative physical and psychological consequences on affected groups (Fried 1963). Critical research, with its prime focus on North America and Great Britain, has identified displacement as the main negative outcome of urban gentrification, extensively damaging for the working-class and urban poor (Atkinson 2000). Chatterjee argues, in an attempt to conceptualize the global urban condition, that displacement should “be transported from the very local contexts of its actualization to form the body politic of analysis” as it forms the very heart of urban exploitation (2014: 4). Research has shown that (re)development processes eradicate important cultural, business, social activities, and homes on a global scale, including Sweden (Hedin *et al.* 2012; Thörn and Despotovic 2015). Our objective is to focus on the local consequences of the current ongoing rental housing renovation processes in Sweden, proven to generate displacement and increased segregation.

Displacement, in the context of the paradoxical “monstrous hybrid” Swedish regulatory system, is currently rolled out at the local scale as objective violence exercised by stakeholders operating “anonymously, systematically and invisibly through the very way society is organized” (Baeten *et al.* 2017: 642). On a national scale though, this is to a large extent a process going on in silence (Baeten *et al.* 2017), and empirical studies of resistance and emotional responses from a micro-scale perspective, individual and neighborhood, are lacking. The lack of qualitative studies of displacement at the local scale is a perspective recently articulated

by Atkinson (2015), arguing that the main body of research tends to present abstract conceptualizations of the phenomenon at hand. Instead, Atkinson encourages researchers “to grasp the lived realities of neighborhood conditions and their negotiation by residents to fully understand affective ties and the damage done to them by rapid capital investments and population changes” (2015: 377), thus following Slater (2006), who emphasizes that the ‘eviction’ of critical perspectives from the discussion on gentrification is partly a methodological problem requiring qualitative and informed research.

Emotions and fractured trust: theoretical framework

In the capitalist order, emotions and lived experiences have been systematically excluded (Negt and Kluge 1993). Feminist scholars were among the first to emphasize the importance of emotions as lived experiences, claiming them to have political character and embeddedness in culture as well as in power structures (Boler 1998, Campbell 1994). Within a particular regime, norms are established, framing certain emotions as acceptable to express while others should be repressed. Here, we employ the term *emotional regime* to refer to a set of norms dominating emotional life in a society complying, for instance, with state-imposed censorship, dominant economic interests, and the political and military exercise of power and control (Reddy 2001). Similar sets of norms, each emphasizing different aspects of such modes of expression, have by sociologists been described as “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1979), “emotional discourses” (Zembylas 2005) or “emotional vocabularies” (Chang 2016). In her work on culture jamming, Wettergren (2009) connected the emotional regime of late capitalism to commodification, seeing strong emotions as undesirable and repressed by the capitalist order. Emotions, though, keep us invested in relationships of power and could be crucial for the transformation into acts of resistance (Ahmed 2014). Thus, in our study, we consider power relations as inherent to emotional expression, shaping the way they are communicated and articulated, suppressed, or encouraged, and setting the rules of who can and cannot express emotions: where, when, how, and so on. In this light, emotions are regarded as reproducing, challenging, or reinforcing power structures in a specific setting (Zembylas 2005). As depicted by Turner and Stets (2005), emotions are considered to be a crucial link between the micro and macro perspectives of social reality. This study stresses the social and cultural (and less so the biological) dimension of emotions, where norms, logic, and symbolic elements are emphasized as dictating the emotional expressions in a certain setting. We define emotions in line with Hochschild (1979: 551), as “bodily cooperation with an image, a thought, a memory – a cooperation of which the individual is aware,” and we focus on *how* these emotions are connected to perceptions of

injustice and violations in the sphere of housing.

Here, we do recognize the complexity of emotions, reproducing and challenging power structures in a society or a specific setting. An important starting point of our study is thus the question of power and status, and how it is reflected in the process of renovation, following Turner's argument on the stratification system of emotions:

Like any other resource—power, prestige, material well-being, health, education, and the like—emotions are unequally distributed across the class system in societies; and their distribution operates in a manner very similar to the distribution of other valued resources in a society (Turner 2009: 350).

We recognize, in line with Collins, that “truly powerful persons do not become angry in a sense, because they do not need to; their get their way without it” (1990:43), and agree with Barbalet arguing that emotions “must be understood within the structural relations of power and status which elicit them. This makes emotion a social-structural as much as if not more than a cultural thing” (1998: 26).

What Baeten and colleagues (2017) have called “objective violence” in their work on Swedish tenants, we use to understand how emotions are conditioned in situations when tenants face displacement. We explore particular injustice and violations identified by tenants in the early stage of a large-scale renovation process and analyze the interconnectedness of expressed emotions and identified violations. Moreover, we use the metaphor of *fractured trust* to conceptualize the emotional reaction of tenants to renovations in Sweden. We define fracture as the act of breaking, or a state of being broken, but also as a state that can be reversed through participatory approaches and a clear tenant perspective on renovation and urban renewal.

Emotions and renovation

The feeling of *shock* was the most prevalent emotion expressed by tenants, described as a response to unfair treatment, a lack of influence regarding the renovations, and experiences of encounters with the housing company. Fullilove (2016) has described the traumatic stress felt by African American communities in the US as their neighborhoods were demolished on a large scale. In our case, the neighborhood was not to be demolished, but the tenants still perceived the coming renovation as a disruption and threat to their wellbeing and community. The shock was amplified by neglect of tenants' requests, needs, and questions regarding

the coming renovation, along with the tenants' perception of lacking influence over the process.

The interviews put forth a complex set of violations performed by the housing company in order to put pressure on the residents, exemplified by our interviewees as "next time we talked, she didn't remember anything of what she had promised" (19), or "I don't dare to ask XX [the housing company]¹. They threaten us. Maybe we will be squashed" (22). The interviews also make known experiences of financial penalties, withdrawn sanctions, and written information described as biased, intimidating, and incorrect. A situation where landlords are forcing their renovation plans upon the residents was previously unthinkable to a majority of the tenants, and was perceived as unreasonable and unjust. The situation was referred to in relation to local and national housing politics and tenants had difficulties in combining their view of a "just" and "equal" Sweden with the current situation. A fracture in the belief of a fair and democratic Swedish society became visible as the vast majority could not combine their previous beliefs and perception with the current situation, lacking in influence and leverage as tenants. Some tenants recall specific moments of strong emotional response that radically changed their perception of the coming renovation process:

I got a shock at the meeting where XX [the housing company] told us about their proposed rent increase. From that day on we were very scared, we didn't know at all what was going to happen. Will we be able to stay put? (6)

The tenants often recalled previous knowledge and experiences of a welfare housing system (i.e. collectively negotiated rents or renovation funds where the tenants' position in negotiations and influence on decisions about their homes was described as strong) and claimed that these were incompatible with the current renovation plans, the lack of tenant involvement, and the planned rent increases in their residential area. The tenants also emphasized the fact that housing shortage in the country and in the city of Uppsala was used by their housing company to create pressure and legitimize the renovation plan. Physical reactions to the renovation plan that were commonly stated in the interviews were extensive perspiration, irregular heartbeats, acute difficulty in breathing, insomnia, or panic attacks.

The overarching emotional response, as we put forth above, was shock. In the interviews, this was in some cases described as mere shock, a sudden alarming change including features like surprise, disbelief, and worry for the future. In the words of one tenant, whose whole family was impacted by news of the planned rent increase:

We think it's really shocking that rent will be increased like this. We're a family with children and a limited income; we don't know where to go. Are we supposed to pay rent and then live on ketchup and spaghetti? What do they think? (7)

The family experienced a sudden change that questioned whether they would be able to stay in their home and retain their position and role in society. Others described a paralysis as a result of the shock they experienced connected to uncertainty about the future: "I have no words right now, but every second it hits the brain, this thing. But I have no words and dare not speak of what will happen" (22).

The feeling of shock was depicted as always present and encompassing different fields of the interviewees' everyday life. To many, the shock resulted in a realization that their economic means would no longer be sufficient to cope, that the new rent would lead to cost-cutting in other areas of everyday expenditure, resulting in the deterioration of their living standard. The situation for elderly tenants, often living alone, was described in quite dramatic terms, often depicting physical reactions to the renovation plans:

You know it's, it's panic. I suffer from panic disorder. I believe it's because of this separation [referring to the coming compulsory move]. I've lived here for nearly 25 years. . . . and I expected to stay here until I died. (17)

The shock described by the tenants was a very complex set of emotions that, contrary to what we expected, did not include shame and guilt. In previous international studies on tenants, shame and guilt have been emphasized as significant emotions in displacement processes (Annunziata and Lees 2015), or as an important emotion to overcome in collective identity formation among tenants (Polanska 2017). The non-presence of these emotions in the context of Sweden is related to the unique Swedish post-war housing policy ambition of neutral forms of tenure, the system of collectively negotiated rents, the strong position of the Tenants' Union, and the determination to raise the attractiveness of rental dwellings. Many of the tenants interviewed in the study expressed a fractured trust vis-à-vis Swedish society, its institutions, representatives and the position of tenants (often previously used as a source of pride). The perception of a strong tenants' position collided with their current experiences and lack of influence in their own neighborhood, thus creating a fracture in trust. We interpret the specific Swedish historical housing context, fostering neutrality between tenure forms and concentrating on universality as an alternative to a system of social housing, as crucial to the lack

of shame and guilt among tenants. Shame is internationally present in contexts where tenants are being marginalized. Moreover, none of the respondents expressed feelings of hope, joy, or anticipation when describing the renovation plans in their area. This could be a result of the fact that our material was gathered at the very beginning of the process, after the housing company had proclaimed their suggested sharp rent increase of 43 percent. Instead, the empirical material brings forward tenants' **anxiety, angst, anger, and loss**, all together attached in a common feeling of shock. These four emotions are the most recurrent in the interview material and will therefore be presented in the following subsections. In the case of anxiety and angst, we have chosen to present these emotions in combination as we believe them to be intimately connected.

Anxiety, angst, and lack of control

A common emotion articulated by the interviewed tenants was the feeling of anxiety, caused by the planned renovation of their housing. Anxiety was, in the interviews, expressed as a physical/bodily feeling of worry, fear, or panic with strong physical symptoms such as speeding heartbeats, chest pressure, or dizziness. As one of the elderly interviewees, when asked about the way she was informed about the renovation, responded:

Through the mailbox, only through the mailbox. My heart started clapping, and I almost had cardiac arrest and a stroke. And, my husband who was alive at the time—he stayed in a retirement home his last years—he told me “[Name] please, how are you going to cope with this? How are you going to handle this?” I told my husband “Don’t you worry, you need your peace and quiet.” But, [this renovation] was his great anxiety before he passed away; how I would cope. (17)

It was common among the tenants to focus on the future and worry about how they would cope economically, physically, and mentally. Not only were those living in the area affected by anxiety, their families and relatives from outside the neighborhood also voiced concern:

My kids are worried about my [starts crying] . . . they’re worried about my . . . mental health, if I might say so. Because you know, I think a lot about this. And I enjoy my nice apartment so much. It is bright, nice, and all that, but I can’t stay put. I can pay up to 6,000 Swedish crowns [app. 600 EUR]. That I’ll manage, but not more. (27)

For larger households living in the area, one of the most acute questions was how

they would cope economically: “What are we going to eat? What are we going to pay? How will we pay other bills?” (23) and “We’ll probably starve. We can’t make our children feel bad by moving to another neighborhood. We’ll pay one whole salary as rent only” (7). Anxiety was usually mixed with other feelings of powerlessness and sadness. The emotion of anxiety communicated a sense of hopelessness, and expressed from the point of view of lack of influence over the course of matters, imagining either a negative or no-way-out situation.

The emotion of **angst** in our material blended the emotions of anxiety and hope. Angst is an interesting emotion thanks to its inclusion of the latter element—which might spur people into action—and, above all, the potential to formulate coping strategies. It was not as paralyzing as anxiety and was described in the interviews as a passing feeling: “Really, I feel very bad [close to tears]. But my temper is such that I can deal with it, sometimes. I’m usually very happy but then I get into these dark moments, and then it, then it passes, you see” (27). It was also common that angst was combined with anger in the interviews:

No, I have no alternative but to stay in the streets, put up a tent in the streets. I cannot afford 10,000 Swedish crowns [app. 1000 EUR] rent. There is no alternative, there is nothing in Uppsala. It is totally fucked. It is impossible for us to pay this much, these rents, they’re not normal. This is not normal in Uppsala. (15)

The impossibility of the situation was here turned into an analysis of the cause behind it, not an individual cause but one located outside of the inhabitants living in Gränby, stressing the unusual and extreme character of the renovation and the resulting rent. Structural explanations were used, and it was not common among tenants to blame themselves for the situation. This, we would like to argue, relates to the particular emotional regime and historical past in Sweden, where tenants have been a collective with a rather strong position in society, not categorized and treated as a marginalized group.

Anger to injustices

Anger was an emotion continuously recurring in a majority of the interviews, and was expressed as a strong uncomfortable emotional response to a perceived unjust situation. The economic threat the renovation posed was mentioned unanimously in the interviews: “I almost get angry; it takes a whole salary to pay the rent. We can’t manage that” (16). The “almost” marks the moderate level of anger expressed in a specific context historically characterized by peacefulness and collaborative attitudes. It was not uncommon that the housing company’s renovation plan generated conflicts within families, such as in this case:

It is really hard, to think about it every day. The worst thing is my husband; he is so angry because of all this, and he wants to move. But not me! He doesn't want to pay this new rent. (31)

What was perceived as unjust treatment was not simply accepted, but could lead to reactions of refusal. What tenants perceived as unreasonably high rent evoked anger and generated conflicts between spouses as well as between children and parents—as this woman describing a situation where her husband had signed the letter of consent² while she was at work:

But, once when I wasn't home, he signed the letter. I wouldn't have let him, and he knew I wouldn't. It felt completely hopeless, that he would do such a thing. Maybe it wouldn't have mattered for us that we didn't sign, but it would help other families that . . . it does matter a lot!
(3)

Above all, the renovation plans threatened the living conditions of numerous families because of the unaffordability of the new rent. Low-income households of non-Swedish background articulated anger mixed with a worry about the future:

I get angry all the time. I don't know what we should do. You know, we're not Swedish. You regard each other differently [as non-Swedes], as a family [referring to the difference between the nuclear family and relatives in Swedish culture]. Now they will divide us. This is why I am really, really angry. (20)

The above quoted tenant interpreted the renovation as a threat to her family's wellbeing and the risk of being divided. When the personal boundaries or **perceived shared principles were violated**, interviewees articulated anger. In some cases, this seemed to have facilitated boundary setting among the tenants, leading to the formulation of a common position and identification of the root causes behind their situation. An illustrative example is this quotation where the interviewee attributed the blame to the housing company and its immoral, systematic, and unjustified behavior:

What XX [current housing company] is doing to us, former XX [housing company], XX [housing company], XX [housing company] and before that, XX [housing company], it is a scandal. It is a scandal, marked with a red pen! (17)

This person perceived the immoral behavior of former and previous housing ow-

ners as scandalous. To describe the situation as a scandal assumed that the tenants had more influence than was given, and expected treatment where the needs and wishes of the tenants were recognized. Some expressed **anger** over a passive state “why doesn’t the government do anything?” (18), and put their own situation into a wider social framework:

It is a scandal in a way, them raising the rent like this. Actually, the same thing happens in Stockholm. It happens all over Sweden, I think XX [the housing company] has changed owners and names many times. Aren’t landlords obliged to save money in funds, to use during reparation? (30)

In several cases the anger expressed by the interviewees seemed to have turned into intensified communication with neighbors, common meetings, and the withdrawal from signing the approval letter, and so on. The emotion of anger was often connected to the feeling of having been treated unjustly. One of the tenants expressed their anger with the situation in the following way:

We get along so well here, we don’t want to move, but they force us. In some way, this is how it feels. Some of us are just working to pay rent, others are buying everything else, and that’s not possible. No! (10)

The forced relocation from the area was described as upsetting and unfair. The interviewee argued that even though they were employed, their salary was not enough to cover the new rent, and compared their situation to other more well-off households. Others portrayed the renovation as a thought-through strategy of the housing company:

It is not reasonable to raise rents as such. And one more thing . . . actually they should not in-crease at all. Why are they raising the rent? I think this has been a plan of theirs for a long time. We pay the rent, some should be saved for repairs and renovation and stuff. This has been well planned for a long time, and we have no one to defend us. You know, they changed owners four times. This is well planned. (26)

Yet others described it in war-like terms, without explicitly identifying the causes behind the current situation but referring to their previous experiences:

It’s almost like moving from the war, almost. We have moved from the

war, and we have found war here as well. It is almost as if the war has come to Gränby. It is almost like a war here, there has been peace and now we have war. (20)

The increased rent was described as irrational, and the interests of tenants as non-existent in the calculation. One tenant simply concluded: “They don’t care about us” (9). Others referred to the unfairness of the whole situation: “I believed our society to be unfair [referring to Syria], but no, the whole world is unfair!” (31). The fracture in trust occurred among the tenants as the trust in Swedish society and its well-functioning and democratic character were experienced as incorrect in the renovation process. The interviewees questioned their role as citizens, the forced character of the renovation, and the lack of protection as a group of tenants.

Loss of meaning

Loss was an emotion expressed in the interviews, describing the failure to gain, win, obtain, or utilize something, but also as something that has been lost and thus not available to the interviewees anymore. When loss was discussed by the tenants, most often the cost was emphasized in relation to the gains. Tenants perceived themselves as paying the price of renovations, while the housing companies or some more abstract entity (“they”) were in control of the cost and profited from the situation. Loss could encompass: 1) loss of a home, 2) loss of social ties, 3) loss of a family, 4) loss of everyday routines, 5) loss of a sense of belonging, 6) loss of wellbeing and comfort, and 7) loss of a meaningful past. Often these aspects of loss were closely interwoven in the interviews and difficult to separate:

You lose something, you know. Gränby has become part of my life, you know. I’ve lived here more than 35 years of my life. I know many people and have attuned to habits like taking a walk and exercising and shopping. Here the shops are close, people are close. (21)

Loss was often expressed with feelings of sadness and grief over something lost, that would have to be rebuilt from scratch:

It is sad, it is. I told my husband that there are mixed feelings as both him and I have enjoyed living in the area, that is all. It is like, well . . . like starting all over again. It feels really hard. (21)

In one case, the procedure of packing and moving was described as mourning:

This feels bad. It is so hard to get going with this packing process, I almost don't. I have to pack myself, my son will help me move. A process of mourning? Yes, absolutely, it is. (8)

The emotion of loss often lacked the energetic twist found in the emotional expression of anger. Loss was mixed with darker emotions of sadness and grief and, in some way, acceptance of the faced injustices. The interviewees not only lost the belief in the democratic functioning of the society, they also lost belief in their influence as tenants and the fairness of the Swedish housing system. The emotions expressed were rather contained and cautiously articulated collectively or in public. They were of a more private nature; however, it was a nature that strongly questioned the role of our interviewees in society as well as the protective role of society vis-à-vis its citizens.

Emotions are not isolated from social reality; instead they are responses to something. In the next section, we explore what the emotions expressed by tenants are responding to before we move on to analyzing how the violations identified by tenants facing extensive and top-down renovation are connected to current Swedish housing policy.

Social injustices and violations evoking emotions

As mentioned earlier, the housing company was perceived as putting tenants under heavy pressure by using a complex system of master suppression techniques. Here, we call these *violations*. We use the concept of violation as it illustrates the transgression of a set of rules, an offence or misdeed, or simply a violent act exerted by somebody—in this case, the representatives of the housing company. It is close to the objective violence discussed by Baeten and colleagues, as it appears neutral, necessary and “forces people to either accept increased rent levels or leave and live with all the physical and psychological disruption this entails” (2017: 642). Intertwined and expressed by tenants in our interviews, we identified strong emotional responses to these violations. Our analysis, distinguished by the tenants experiencing expansive renovation, builds upon a theoretical understanding inspired by Ås (2004) and her theory of master suppression techniques, in which she has distinguished: making invisible, ridicule, withholding information, double-punishment, and projection of guilt and shame. These five techniques were developed for a different context but have served as a source of inspiration for our formulation of the enactment by the housing company. The violations presented here are based on examples and descriptions given in the interviews, represented especially through the violent practices of making invisible; withholding information; threat, or threat of force and sanctions; inaccessibility of the housing company; and rule by division. These violations are also clearly reflecting the positions of

power and access to power, influence, and control in the renovation situation. The representatives of the housing company are by our interviewees described as those exerting power, not always justifiably or fairly.

Making invisible the needs of tenants

Tenants did not perceive themselves as involved in the planning process, instead notions of a housing company that did not listen were expressed: “They don’t show any interest in our opinion” (5). Tenants trying to express their opinions were ignored or met by an evasive attitude: “XX [housing company] pretend they don’t understand our critique” (1). Others, however, described the housing company representatives as hard and impermeable: “They’re so tough, rock-solid. They don’t respect other people’s hearts” (22), and that all important decisions had already been made over the heads of the tenants.

Information letters and meetings were generally perceived as enacted “for show,” a mere formality without relevant content. Information was provided in Swedish only, and some expressed this as an exclusion strategy (6). Tenants questioned the extent of the planned renovation and regarded the answers given by the housing company as unsatisfactory: “This is not necessary. Why do they do it like this? It is not necessary to do this much” (6).

Withholding information and not giving full answers

Written information from the housing company was described as meaningless and one-sided/biased. Tenants felt uninformed and perceived it as intimidating, and misleading. Tenants described situations where they were not informed of their rights, regarding, for example, financial compensation during renovation: “They didn’t know about their right to compensation (. . .), they have not gotten any information” (6). Questions were not adequately answered during meetings where, according to the tenants, housing company representatives did not add any relevant information. It was common among the tenants to stress that “We have gotten the information, but they just repeat the same things, over and over again. Nothing is new,” (20) or “I’ve been to XX [housing company] information meetings. Some questions are actually left without answer. They can’t answer our questions! Perhaps they don’t want to reveal things?” (16)

Threat, or threat of force and sanctions

Representatives of the housing company were portrayed as exerting pressure to make tenants sign an approval letter. Without the tenants signing this formal paper, the housing company is not, in theory, allowed to go ahead with the planned rent increase. Other ways of exerting pressure described in the interviews were, for instance, harassing telephone calls from representatives of the housing com-

pany, threats that tenants will be removed from the queue for another (cheaper) apartment. These threats were perceived by the tenants as “a method of making people sign the letter of approval, because as soon as you sign, “poof,” the lock [on the website] is removed” (31). This practice also included indirect threats in the written information given to tenants (cf. Westin 2011) or the threat to take the conflict to the Rent Tribunal (*Hyresnämnden*). In Sweden, conflicts between tenants and housing companies regarding renovations are solved in this tribunal, and the tenants are often aware of the minimal possibility of winning at the tribunal and thus fear ending up in court in the first place:

Unfortunately, we had to sign as my husband felt extremely scared after having seen the letter from Hyresnämnden [the Rent Tribunal]. As the letter came, he immediately got scared, and he didn't want to go to Tingsrätten [local court]. He didn't want that. (3)

The sanction of a tough inspection of apartments when moving out has been stressed by the tenants and functioned as a discouraging example for others: “They told us we would have to sign the letter of approval, or we would have to pay for the inspection” (6). Tenants perceived themselves as being punished for their “lack of collaboration” with high and unfounded financial penalties. In some cases, tenants were promised help in moving but whenever they did not cooperate, the threat of withdrawing the help was stated by the company. Conversely, some tenants were offered privileges if collaborating.

Inaccessibility of the housing company

Tenants described difficulties in reaching the housing company at their offices or via telephone or email, and perceived the housing company as more or less inaccessible. This was also described as a lack of response and answers when contact was initiated. This specific violation was described together with a practice of not giving full answers. Tenants also spoke about constant worries to not receive help from the housing company, and about agreements that were not fulfilled: “You have to nag and keep getting back to them for help” (1). Tenants were concerned about the energy they put into getting in touch with, or being heard. Some told stories of housing company representatives shuffling their questions around to others, and described themselves as powerless in the situation, incapable of getting through.

Rule by division

Tenants described situations where the housing company organized small-scale local meetings, avoiding larger assemblies; giving out different and ambiguous in-

formation; or spreading rumors, creating frustration. Several felt that this kind of practice was confusing, creating divisions and distrust: “At the general meetings, they [referring to the housing company] say it is all speculation. I don’t believe that. They say they might change things, but first they have to organize things more. Who should I believe?” (24). But it was not only with regards to the information given by the housing company, it was also described as practices of separating tenants physically. Tenants told of relatives and friends who used to live on the same street, now scattered all over town (6), and described the current state of their neighborhood as being emptied: “I see many empty apartments everywhere,” (8) or “Yesterday, I saw eight trucks, people just move. Look around, it’s only empty apartments everywhere” (25).

Conclusions

The emotions expressed in our interviews, by tenants facing extensive renovation in Sweden, are interpreted by us as responses to the violations exerted by the housing company. Our study shows that the most recurrent emotions were anxiety, angst, anger, and loss, all together attached in a common feeling of shock. Most importantly, emotions and the descriptions of violations exercised by the housing company were intertwined in our interviews, demonstrating how they are part of a larger systemic violence currently being exerted against residents of poor areas in Sweden, as described by Baeten and colleagues (2017).

We would like to argue that the shock and feeling of being unjustly treated and violated has its origin in the Swedish emotional regime, characterized by a common and exceptionally high trust towards the state and its institutions, as well as widespread confidence in the welfare system and the universalistic Swedish model (cf. Trägårdh 2009). The dominant emotional regime is characterized by the assumption that Swedish society is well-functioning and fair to its citizens, and that excessive emotional responses are unnecessary. This is also evident among tenants facing forced renovation. We have chosen to conceptualize this situation as a *fractured trust* to understand the emotional reaction of tenants experiencing and living in the midst of these processes. Moreover, we argue that today’s top-down approach exercised by housing companies in the renovation of rental neighborhoods in Sweden, not allowing tenants to voice their concerns and needs or even silencing them by exerting their power and using the violations described, is one of the main causes of this fractured trust. The collision of the dominant assumptions of a fair and democratic society and the violations carried out by the housing company is a mirror reflection of the incompatible features inherent in the “monstrous hybrid” combining state-regulation (and, for instance, the traditionally strong position of tenants) with components of the market (Christophers

2013); in this case, profit-driven renovation, causing a state of shock among exposed tenants.

This is also, in our interpretation, why tenants' narratives in this study lack the emotion of guilt and shame. We understand this as a remnant of the country's past progressive housing policies and the subsequent trust in the state and welfare system. The collision of the expectations of fair treatment and democratic influence and the forced nature of the renovation could be interpreted as a result of "the reengineering and redeployment of the state as the core agency that sets the rules and fabricates the subjectivities, social relations and collective representations suited to realising markets" (Wacquant 2012: 66). Studies have demonstrated that the Swedish housing system has been undergoing deregulation and neoliberalization since the 1990s (Hedin *et al.* 2012). The ongoing and widely spread processes of forced renovations of rental housing in Sweden has resulted in deepened segregation and could be described as an example of "the centaur-state" put in motion, namely a state "that practices liberalism at the top of the class structure and punitive paternalism at the bottom" (Wacquant 2012: 66). This is particularly manifest in areas undergoing renovations, where the support offered to tenants by the state comes mainly as individual housing allowances alongside the recent introduction of a relatively small state fund directed to housing companies with moderate renovation rent increases (in 2016). What we see taking place in Sweden today is the successive eradication of past housing policies, holding equality and universality as ideals, and the crass takeover of the economic reason of neoliberal governing rationality. Tenants in neighborhoods under renovation, in public as well as private housing, experience this eradication of common values first hand, played out as displacement—whether temporal, permanent, actual, or potential. This rationality has been described by Wendy Brown as hollowing out democratic principles in the Euro-Atlantic world by "undoing basic elements of democracy" and replacing them with economic ones (2015: 17). In our case, the planning and decisions regarding how these renovations are carried out is done without the participation of those most affected, the tenants themselves, thus legitimizing the circumvention of democratic practices by use of mainly economic, environmental, and technical arguments.

However, in the last few years, we have observed an increased awareness regarding renovation and displacement, and mobilization among Swedish tenants outside the established institutions and traditional civil society organizations. In our understanding, this development is the start of a growing housing movement in Sweden, forming a response to the intensification of socioeconomic inequalities and, in particular, housing inequalities, during a severe housing shortage in a country where the myth of equal and universal housing prevails.

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Notes

¹We have chosen not to use the name of the housing company in our study as we believe that the situation in Gränby is in no way unique to the area or to the housing company referred to in the interviews.

² A letter of consent is sent to tenants when renovation is being planned by a housing company. Tenants need to approve the renovation before it starts.

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