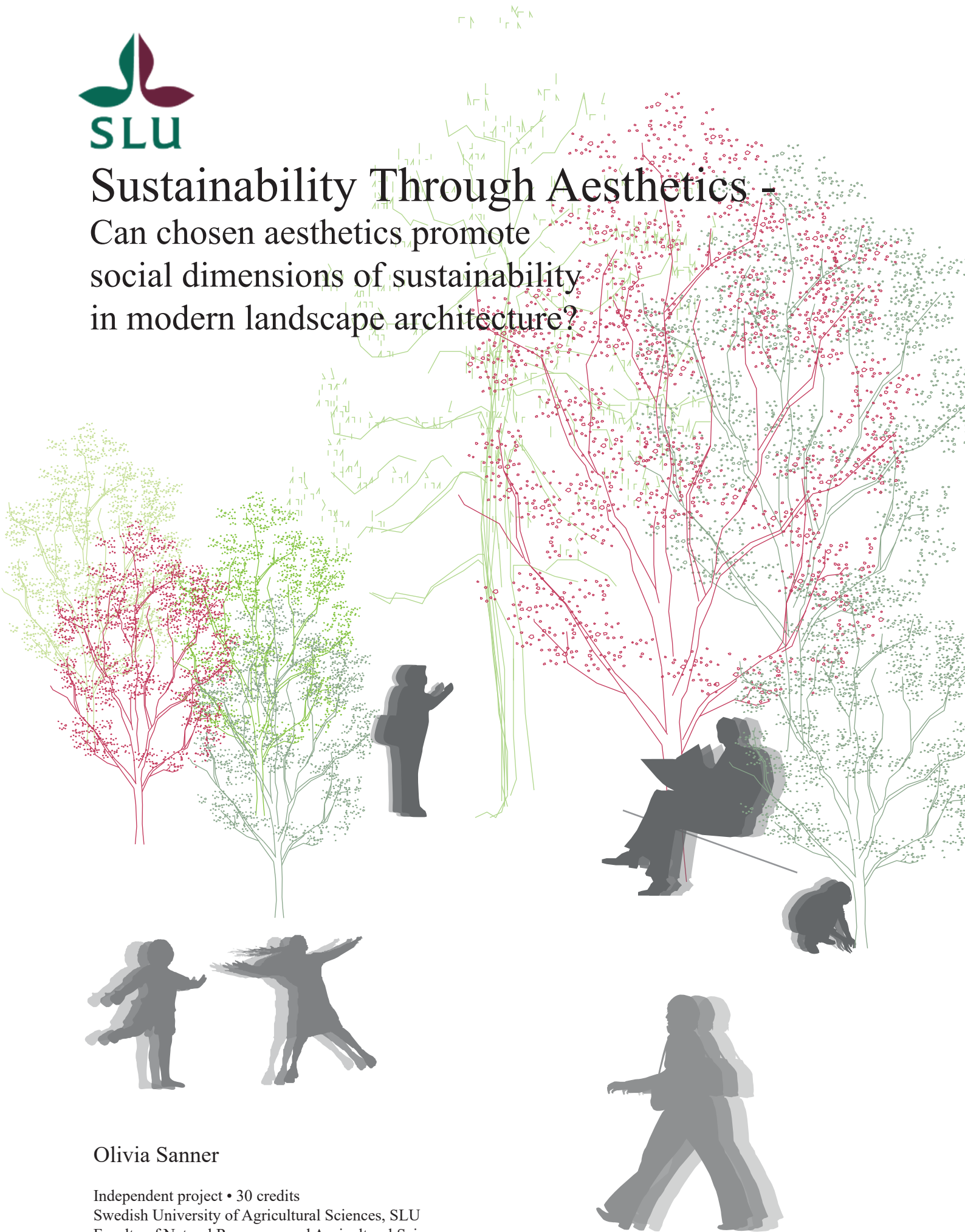




# Sustainability Through Aesthetics - Can chosen aesthetics promote social dimensions of sustainability in modern landscape architecture?



Olivia Sanner

Independent project • 30 credits  
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU  
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences  
Landscape Architecture Programme - Uppsala  
Uppsala 2023

## Sustainability through aesthetics. Can chosen aesthetics promote social dimensions of sustainability in modern landscape architecture?

*Hållbarhet genom estetik. Kan vald estetik främja sociala dimensioner av hållbarhet i modern landskapsarkitektur?*

Olivia Sanner

**Supervisor:** Vera Vicenzotti, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Department of Urban and Rural Development

**Examiner:** Hildegun Nilsson Varhelyi, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Department of Urban and Rural Development

**Assistant examiner:** Viveka Hoff, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Department of Urban and Rural Development

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**Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences**  
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Department of Urban and Rural Development  
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## Sammanfattning

Det finns en nationell och global övertygelse om att inkludering av estetik och design i stadsplanering kan främja hållbarhet och en efterfrågan på hur man ska gå till väga. Genom att studera relevant litteratur framkommer det att det finns en avsaknad i diskussionen om hur estetik kan bidra till social hållbarhet. Landskapsarkitekter har kompetensen att arbeta med estetik och design för de nationella och globala hållbarhetsmålen. I den här uppsatsen har tre huvudkällor (Meyer (2008), van Etteger et al. (2016) och Lehtinen (2021)) använts som grund för det teoretiska ramverket.

Genom att studera hur landskapsarkitekter arbetar med estetik i projekt med fokus på social hållbarhet kan det vara möjligt att förstå och lära sig mer om hur man utvecklar den gemensamma miljön. I den här uppsatsen har landskapsarkitektkontoret *Landskapslaget*, och ett av deras projekt som fokuserar på social hållbarhet, valts att studera. Projektet är från 2019 då kontoret fick i uppdrag att utveckla parken *Flemingsbergsparken* som är belägen i Stockholm.

Uppsatsens frågeställning "*På vilket sätt arbetar Landskapslaget med estetik i ett projekt för att främja de sociala hållbarhetsdimensionerna?*" besvaras genom att studera landskapsarkitektkontorets dokument kring social hållbarhet, samt genom en intervju om det valda projektet med en landskapsarkitekt som arbetat med det. Analysen är uppdelad i de tre framtagna teman som består av *Co-design möjliggör estetiska upplevelser som betonar en gemensam identitet*, *Estetik kan överbrygga olika behov och preferenser* och *Estetik för att stärka en sammanhållen stad*, där olika definitioner av estetik diskuteras.

Landskapsarkitekterna arbetar med estetik på olika sätt och med olika skalor. Co-design är att ge insikt i vad människor som bor i ett specifikt område tycker är viktigt, och människor kommer att ha olika åsikter när det kommer till estetik, design och funktioner i ett område. Det är relevant att använda sättet van Etteger et al. (2016) tillämpar ACT-teorin inom landskapsarkitektur för att se estetik ur ett bredare perspektiv. De icke-estetiska egenskaperna från samskapandet har lett till estetiska egenskaper som resulterar i en samlad identitet, lyckas knyta samman olika funktioner, och förbättra den upplevda tryggheten. Meyer (2008) och Lehtinen (2021) menar att estetik kan få människor att vara medvetna om och bry sig om sin miljö. I det här projektet kan samskapandet ha lett till att människor bryr sig om parken och kan vara orsaken till att parken inte har blivit vandaliserad.

Val av estetik har visat sig vara viktiga delar för att främja de sociala dimensionerna av hållbarhet i landskapsarkitektur. Estetik har visat sig vara ett komplext begrepp, men genom att bredda definitionen och innebörden av det kan man hitta nya sätt att arbeta med det för att främja dimensioner av social hållbarhet. Samskapande är en viktig del för att hitta den lämpliga estetiken för en viss plats och är nödvändigt för att förstå hur man uppnår social hållbarhet.

## Abstract

There is a national and global belief that including aesthetics and design in city planning can promote sustainability, and a demand for how to do it. Based on studying pertinent literature, there is a lack of discussion on how aesthetics can contribute to the discussion on social sustainability. Landscape architects have the competence to work with aesthetics and design for the national and global sustainability goals. In this thesis three main sources (Meyer (2008), van Etteger et al. (2016) and Lehtinen (2021)) have been used to form the theoretical framework.

By studying how landscape architects work with aesthetics in projects focusing on social sustainability, it might be possible to understand and learn more about how to develop the common environment. In this essay, the landscape architect office *Landskapslaget*, and one of their projects that focuses on social sustainability, has been chosen to study. The project is from 2019, when the office was commissioned to develop the park *Flemingsbergsparken*, which is located in Stockholm.

The work's research question "*In what way does Landskapslaget work with aesthetics in a project in order to promote the social sustainability dimensions?*" is answered through studying the landscape architect office's documents regarding social sustainability, and through one interview about the chosen project with a landscape architect who worked with it. The analysis is divided into the three themes *Co-design makes possible aesthetic experiences that emphasise a shared identity*, *Aesthetics can bridge different needs and preferences*, and *Aesthetics for strengthening a cohesive city*, in which different definitions of aesthetics are being discussed.

The landscape architects work with aesthetics in different ways and with different scales. Co-design is giving insight into what the people living in a specific area think are important, and people will have different opinions when it comes to aesthetics, design, and functions of an area. It is relevant to use the way van Etteger et al. (2016) apply the ACT theory in landscape architecture to see aesthetics from a broader perspective. The non-aesthetic properties from the co-creation have led to aesthetic properties that result in a gathered identity, manages to tie together different functions, and improve safety. Meyer (2008) and Lehtinen (2021) argues that aesthetics can make people be aware and care for their environment. In this project, the co-creation might have led to people caring for the park and can be the reason that the park has not been vandalised.

Choices of aesthetics are shown to be important parts in promoting the social dimensions of sustainability in landscape architecture. Aesthetics are proven to be a complex concept, but broadening the definition and meaning of it, one can find new ways of how to work with it for promoting dimensions of social sustainability. Co-creation is an important part of finding the suitable aesthetics for a certain place and necessary to understand how to achieve social sustainability.

## Preface/ Thanks to

During the autumn 2022 I did an internship at the landscape architect office *Landskapslaget*. They had just started a research request on the concept of *aesthetic sustainability* together with Uppsala Municipality, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, and the property developers NordR. The project aims to explore the concept of *aesthetic sustainability* and its meaning, as well as how and if the use of the concept could enrich the sustainability debate, and ultimately create more sustainable environments. It is based on Sanna Lehtinen's understanding of the concept, where she argues that aesthetics offers an approach to change attitudes and interests in order to promote sustainable individual and social practices. I got involved in the project and was inspired to write about aesthetics and sustainability.

Thanks to *Landskapslaget* and everyone who has been involved and helped during the work. It has been rewarding to have the opportunity to talk to several landscape architects and, through the access to materials, to be able to follow your work with sustainability and the specific project's process.

Many thanks to my supervisor Vera Vicenzotti who gave invaluable guidance, answered all my questions with a genuine interest and great knowledge, while at the same time motivated me as the work went on.

The colour choice in the essay's layout has been inspired by Pantone's Colour of the Year, which is called **Viva Magenta 18-1750**. The colour is described as powerful, bold, joyful, and inclusive, and stands for much that is stated in this essay. Aesthetic choices can be powerful and bold, and likewise lead to joy and inclusion.

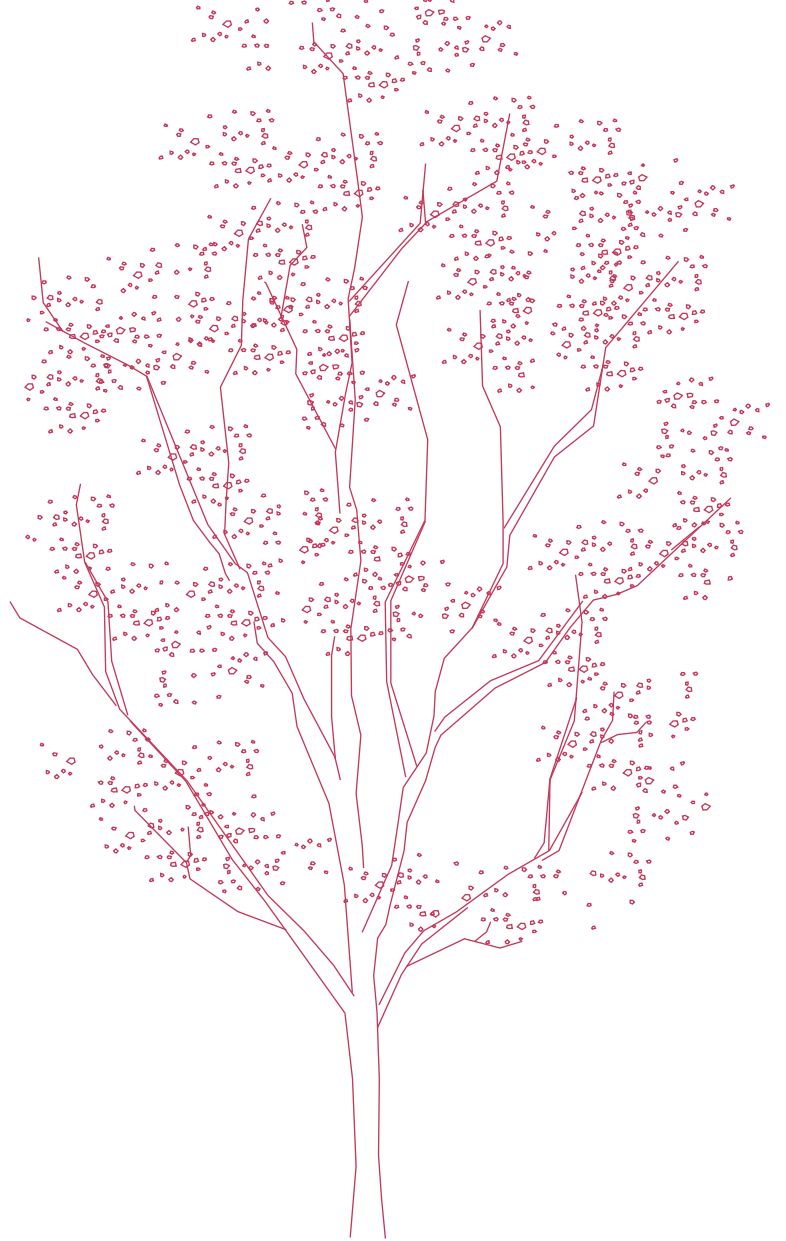
This year's Colour of the Year is powerful and empowering. It is a new animated red that revels in pure joy, encouraging experimentation and self-expression without restraint, an electrifying, and a boundaryless shade that is manifesting as a stand-out statement. **PANTONE 18-1750 Viva Magenta** welcomes anyone and everyone with the same verve for life and rebellious spirit. It is a colour that is audacious, full of wit and inclusive of all. (Pantone 2023)



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# Introduction



# 1. Introduction

On January 1st, 2016, the Global Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development replaced the Millennium Development Goals that the UN and the countries of the world had been working on since the year 2000. The Millennium Development Goals mainly concerned poorer countries with a focus on giving everyone access to clean water, reducing child mortality and eradicating poverty. In 2012, world leaders met in Rio de Janeiro for a conference about sustainability. This resulted in a decision which meant that the new goals should be developed in an inclusive process. For three years, actors such as civil society, researchers, and academics were invited to discuss and contribute to the new agenda. World leaders adopted the global goals in 2015. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are divided into 169 sub-goals that are supposed to contribute to ecologically, economically, socially sustainable development and environmentally sustainable development in all countries of the world (The UN association of Sweden n.d.). Hardly anywhere in the SDGs, aesthetics is mentioned. This thesis sets out to explore whether aesthetic concern as one of the core competences of landscape architects, have a role to play in a sustainability agenda.

## 1.1 Background

It is important to point out that the concept of aesthetics can have different meaning in different contexts. The purpose with this thesis is not to try to make an exact definition of the concept, but to explore how we can use it when discussing and promoting sustainability. Through the thesis, the concept will be discussed in contexts regarding what we see with our eyes and what we experience in our minds to try to investigate how we can use it for promoting social sustainability.

### 1.1.1 Sustainability and aesthetics in transnational and national policies

The eleventh sustainable development goal is called *Sustainable cities and communities* and the purpose of it is “*to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*” (The New Urban Agenda Platform n.d.). To agree on the work for a sustainable housing and sustainable urban development future, the conference Habitat III was held in October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador (UN 2016). The shared

vision is called the New Urban Agenda and addresses challenges and opportunities of urbanisation by providing guidance in design, development, finance, governance, management, and planning. Achieving the SDGs requires collaboration between local actors, including regional and local governments, as well as other relevant stakeholders (The New Urban Agenda Platform n.d.).

In 2018, the Swedish government adopted the *Policy for designed living environments (Politik för gestaltad livsmiljö)*. The proposition will serve as a national tool for developing the common environment. It contains a proposal for a new architecture, design, and form policy where the goal is for architecture, design, and form to contribute to a sustainable, equal, and less segregated society. It should contribute to carefully designed living environments where everyone is given the conditions to be able to understand, participate and contribute to how the common environment is to be developed. The intention is to develop a broadened and strengthened competence in the areas of architecture, design, and form as well as knowledge of the different stakeholders in the field. The importance of developing good contact areas for the stakeholders and knowledge of current regulations and project processes are also highlighted. The government points out that knowledge of aesthetics and design needs to be made accessible and useful to political decision-makers, and the general public, as well as professionals, in order to contribute to continuous quality and development work (Kulturdepartementet 2018).

The Swedish government has singled out four actors that they find extra important to include in the sustainability work since they together capture the building-blocks of the designed living environments. These are ArkDes (a museum, a knowledge centre, and an arena for debate on architecture and design), The authority for National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket) (the authority for community planning, construction, and housing), The Swedish National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet) (the authority that ensures that cultural heritage is preserved, used, and developed) and the Public art agency of Sweden (Statens konstråd) (the authority that works for public art to be accessible and innovative in the living environments). In order to get a holistic perspective of the concept of designed living environments, the four authorities have been assigned joint tasks that deal with creating knowledge in building, guidance and cooperation (ArkDes 2020).

The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning's responsibility is coordination, competence support and efforts in matters of architecture and designed living environment for public actors at national, regional, and local level (ArkDes 2020). The Swedish government highlights the importance of The

National Board of Housing, Building and Planning's role when it comes to developing tools for municipalities when working with the inclusion of aesthetics. It should be made clear that requirements for aesthetics are an important part of the application of PBL (the planning and building law) (Kulturdepartementet 2018). The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has also appointed Sweden's first national architect, Helena Bjarnegård, to gather forces around the issues for increased knowledge and guidance of government authorities, regions, and municipalities. The Swedish National Heritage Board oversees matters relating to cultural heritage, which extensively deals with cultural landscapes, cultural environments, cultural objects, and museums. The Public art agency of Sweden work to ensure that art becomes a natural and visible element in our environments and spreads and develops knowledge about public art. ArkDes has a responsibility for various perspectives linked to architecture, design and form and must work to ensure that the national goals are achieved by conducting and initiating research. The task is also to strengthen knowledge and promote interest in the values of architecture, design and form for individuals and society (ArkDes 2020).

In the ArkDes report *Quality of life in time and space* from 2021 the Swedish national architect Helena Bjarnegård argues that the climate work has so far focused on technology and has been about promoting technical innovations. Bjarnegård believes that technical innovations need to be combined with carefully designed habitats but that there are large and complex challenges. The interview also points out the importance of using the knowledge of creative professionals in order to develop inclusive environments, i.e., environmentally sustainable, beautiful, democratic, and meaningful places for all. This requires that architects, designers, antiquarians, artists, engineers, and social scientists work together in dialogue with business, academia, and residents (ArkDes 2021).

Bjarnegård compares the Swedish government's proposition *Policy for Designed Living (Politik för gestaltad livsmiljö)* with the European Commission's New European Bauhaus initiative.

The keywords for the New European Bauhaus, sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion, could also describe the Swedish government's goals for architecture, form and design. Just like the *Policy for designed living environment*, the New European Bauhaus highlights the power of design and the possibility to contribute to a sustainable way of building our cities and societies. Both initiatives put humans and human's habitats in the centre, and both initiatives

see sustainability from a holistic perspective, where cultural and social sustainability are equally important as the environmental dimension of sustainability.<sup>1</sup> (ArkDes 2021:24)

### 1.1.2 Aesthetics promoting sustainability in landscape architecture

The Swedish government's proposition *Policy for Designed Living* and the European Commission's New European Bauhaus initiative, both emphasise the importance of including aesthetics in the sustainability work. Landscape architects possess knowledge about ecology, social values, and design which means that landscape architects have the competence to work with the concept sustainability for the national and global goals.

There are several texts and reports written about concepts and perspectives about how aesthetics can promote sustainability in landscape architecture. Lehtinen (2021) and Meyer (2008) have a focus on how aesthetics can contribute to a sustainable development and environmental concern in society. That beauty can motivate people to care for the environment and the earth. van Etteger, Thompson and Vicenzotti (2016) focus on the importance of aesthetics in landscape architecture and present Zangwill's Aesthetic Creation Theory (ACT) as a tool to explain how aesthetic experiences are created. The ACT theory removes the distinction between fine art and useful art. Zangwill argues that works of art consists of both essential aesthetic functions and non-aesthetic functions like ecological and practical ones.

ArkDes (2022) latest report for following up the *Policy for Designed Living* is called *A society that sticks together* and was released on the 9th of March 2023. This year's theme has its starting point in that Sweden has challenges with increased inequality and segregation, which can lead to polarisation and conflicts. How to work with the theme and the three sustainability dimensions are formulated as follows:

- *Designed living environment as a basis for a society that sticks together* - Equality and segregation prevention design for strengthened social sustainability.

---

<sup>1</sup> The quote in Swedish: Ledorden för New European Bauhaus, hållbarhet, estetik och inkludering, skulle också kunna beskriva riksdagens mål för arkitektur, form och design. Precis som politiken för gestaltad livsmiljö lyfter New European Bauhaus gestaltningens kraft och möjlighet att bidra till ett hållbart samhällsbygge. Båda initiativen sätter människan och människors livsmiljöer i centrum och båda handlar om att se på hållbarhet utifrån ett holistiskt perspektiv där den kulturella och sociala hållbarheten är lika viktiga som den miljömässiga. (ArkDes 2021:24)

- *Designed living environment as key in environmental and climate work* - Careful development and preservation of existing built environments for enhanced environmental sustainability.
- *Designed habitat that leverages for the economy* - Quality in construction and management as an engine for economic sustainability in shaping habitats.

The goal with this thesis is to add insights for a broader view on sustainability in landscape architecture. Based on studying pertinent literature, there is a lack of discourse on how aesthetics can contribute to the discussion about social sustainability. As mentioned, landscape architects have the competence to work with aesthetics and design for the national and global sustainability goals. By studying how landscape architects work with aesthetics in projects focusing on social sustainability, it might be possible to understand and learn more about how to develop the common environment. In this thesis I chose to study the landscape architect office *Landskapslaget*, where I did my internship, and one of their projects focusing on social dimensions of sustainability.

The chosen project is called Flemingsbergsparken and is a project that was built in 2019. This makes it possible to see the process from the construction to the finished result and what people living there think of it today. The fact that people appreciate it, feel safer in it, and spend time in it today, indicates that the landscape architects managed to work with social sustainability in a successful way. This makes it a suitable project for investigating how aesthetics can promote the dimensions of social sustainability.

## 1.2 Purpose and goal

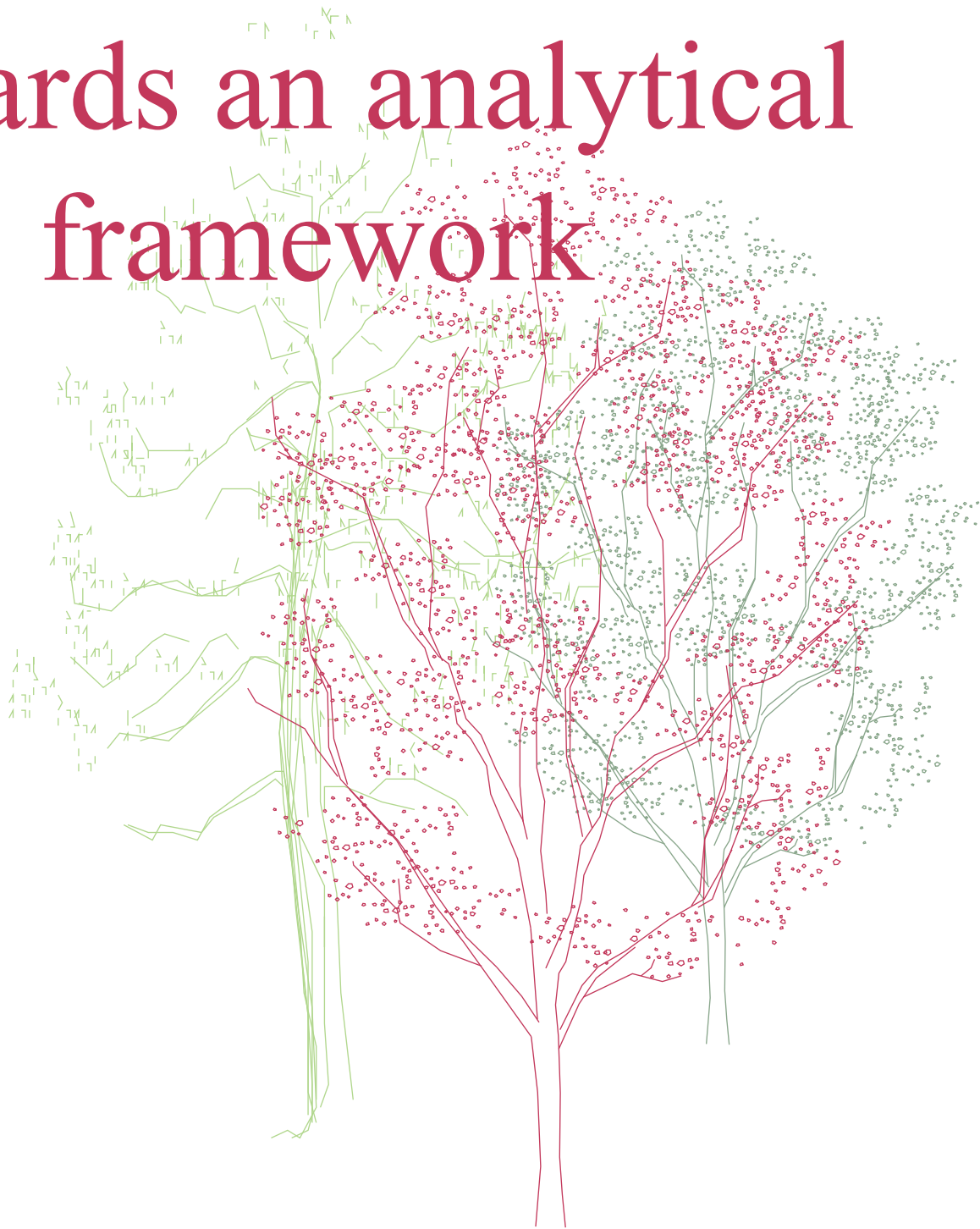
The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how the aesthetic dimensions of a landscape architect project can promote the social dimensions of sustainability.

The goal with the thesis is to add insights for a broader view on sustainability in landscape architecture.

## 1.3 Question

In what way does *Landskapslaget* work with aesthetics in a project in order to promote the social sustainability dimensions?

# Towards an analytical framework





## 2. Towards an analytical framework

To answer the research question, the landscape architect office *Landskapslaget AB* has been chosen. It is a privately owned Swedish landscape architect and urban planning office with a well-developed sustainability strategy. To learn more about how aesthetics can promote the social dimension, one of *Landskapslaget's* projects promoting social sustainability has been chosen. In the following section materials, methods, and theoretical standpoints will be presented.


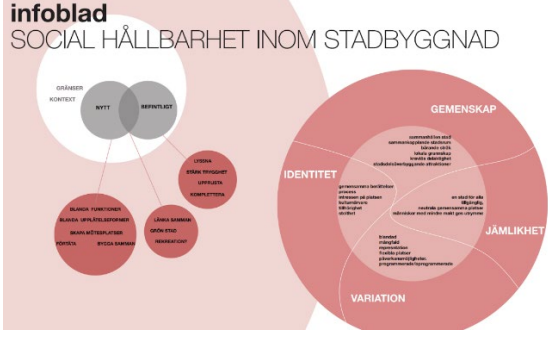
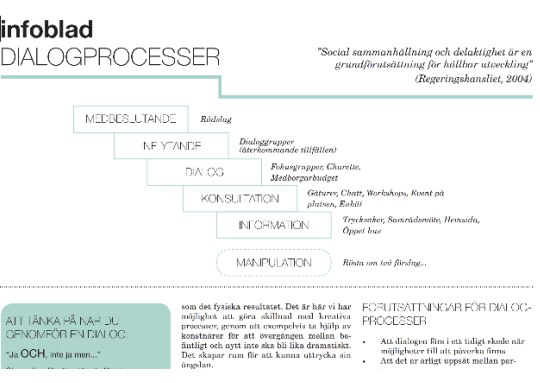
### 2.1 Materials and methods

The study pursues a qualitative research strategy, which according to Davidsson and Patel (2019), usually is made through verbal analysis methods. This means that the data collection focuses on "soft" data such as interviews. The qualitative research strategy takes its form in the collection of "soft" data, such as in this case, consisting of content analyses and semi-structured interviews. This study has been performed through studying the office's sustainability documents, and looking closer at one of the office's projects which focuses on social sustainability. To get more insight in how the landscape architects work with sustainability and have been working with the aesthetics of the chosen project, semi-structured interviews have been made.

#### 2.1.1 Materials

The materials used for the study are:

- *Landskapslaget's* sustainability strategy and documents containing information about social sustainability:

Type of document	What it has been used for
 <p data-bbox="263 743 831 795"><i>Landskapslaget's</i> handbook that deals with the office's work with sustainability.</p>	<p data-bbox="863 376 1284 645">This text has been studied to see how the architects at <i>Landskapslaget</i> have arrived at the content of their manifesto for sustainability. The document has been important for the understanding of how they work with sustainability in their projects.</p>
 <p data-bbox="263 1214 751 1265"><i>Landskapslaget's</i> internal information sheet about social sustainability in urban development.</p>	<p data-bbox="863 862 1300 1198">Studying how <i>Landskapslaget</i> define social sustainability and work with it in urban development. In this document, <i>Landskapslaget</i> describe the four perspectives they consider important in the work for social sustainability (see page 43-44). They form the basis for the three themes that I have developed in the analysis of this thesis.</p>
 <p data-bbox="263 1724 774 1776"><i>Landskapslaget's</i> internal information sheet about dialogue processes.</p>	<p data-bbox="863 1332 1300 1668">Studying how <i>Landskapslaget</i> promote dialogue processes. Was studied to find connections between social sustainability and aesthetics. The word aesthetics is not mentioned, but traces from the four perspectives (from <i>Landskapslaget's</i> internal information sheet about social sustainability in urban development) could be discerned.</p>

**REFERENSPROJEKT**  
SOCIALA PROCESSER SOM METOD

**TILLFÄLLIGA PLATSER/MESKAPANDEPROCESS**

**LEK DET DU INTE VET - (REFERENSPROJEKT) 2019**  
MEDSKAPANDE MED UNGA  
Platsbikning som utvecklades genom tillfälliga installationer på platsen. Projektet genomfördes genom kreativ research med flera barngrupper. Resultatet i en interaktiv installation på en offentlig plats i anslutning till nybyggnation av bostäder.  
*Beställare:* Nocka Konstrukt, kontrakt att skapa stad  
*Stad:* Gestaltning/projekttering för totalentreprenad, byggd

**KV AROMEN, NORRA LJILJEHOLMEN, STOCKHOLM 2020**  
TILLFÄLLIG PLATS  
Gestaltning och projekttering av tillfällig aktivitets- och mötesplats. Platsen har planerats med en begränsad budget. Material samt utrustning från staden och stadsdelen har återanvänts för att utnyttja maximal funktion till minimal kostnad. Ett samverkansprojekt som ritas, byggs och färdigställs inom några få månader.  
*Beställare:* Exploateringskontoret, Stockholms stad  
*Stad:* Gestaltning/projekttering för totalentreprenad, byggd

**RE-IMAGINE SÖDERMALMSMÄLLÉN - ACTION RESEARCH**  
MEDSKAPANDE MED UNGDOMAR, BARN OCH ÄLDRE  
Projektet i stort omfattar att utveckla sociala aktiviteter och prototyper för att hitta det som behövs för att Södermalmsmällén ska bli en levande och attraktiv plats att vara på och besöka. Innehåller för alla behovet vi ska fram successivt och fortsätta stötta av olika aktörer och staden längs vägen. Genom Action Research kan projektet samspela på två sätt, det kan undersöka befintliga värden och fånga in behov och önskemål, samtidigt som det skapar en ny kreativ mötesplats genom olika händelser och aktiviteter.

Bild: Gestaltning/förslag för terräsn, Södermalms-Mälla

*Landskapslaget's market sheet about social processes as a method.*

Studying how *Landskapslaget* work with social processes as a method. The text was studied to find connections between social sustainability and aesthetics. The word aesthetics is not mentioned, but traces from the four perspectives (from *Landskapslaget's* internal information sheet about social sustainability in urban development) could be discerned.

**Socialt värdeskapande I STADSPLANERING**

Stadsplanering ska bidra till utvecklingskvalitet i hela staden och till ett bra miljö- och socialt kapital. Det gäller att tillgodose behovet av bra bostäder för alla och att skapa väl gestaltade och trygga offentliga rum som även utgör arenor för kultur, utmaning, utveckling, utvärdering av stadens utveckling. Men hur uppnås arenor för samspel? Och hur kan vi i vår profession utforma dessa?

**Vad vill vi uppnå?**  
**Arenor för samspel**

**Hur uppnår vi det?**  
**Se varandra i vardagen**

**Hur uppnår vi det?**  
**Knyt samman staden**

**Varför?** För att bidra till en levande och attraktiv stad. För att bidra till en stad där alla vill bo och där alla vill vara. För att bidra till en stad där alla vill vara tillsammans. För att bidra till en stad där alla vill vara tillsammans. För att bidra till en stad där alla vill vara tillsammans.

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*Landskapslaget's market sheet about social value creation in urban development.*

Studying how *Landskapslaget* work with strategies that promotes planning and designing for social sustainability. The text was studied to find connections between social sustainability and aesthetics. The word aesthetics is not mentioned, but traces from the four perspectives (from *Landskapslaget's* internal information sheet about social sustainability in urban development) could be discerned.

- Plans, notes, documents, sketches, and pictures from the study project:

Type of document	What it has been used for
 <p>The proposed changes in the area that was shown for the citizens in the first citizen dialogue.</p>	<p>Studying how the ideas for the design of the park changes between the two citizen dialogues.</p>
 <p>The finished proposal for Flemingsbergsparken.</p>	<p>Studying the aesthetics of the finished park. The plan was used during the interview to gain more understanding in the architects' choice of aesthetics.</p>
<p>Sketches and notes from the one artist and lighting designers that were a part of designing Flemingsbergsparken.</p>	<p>Studying sketches and notes to get more information about the chosen aesthetics.</p>
<p>Pictures of Flemingsbergsparken.</p>	<p>Looking at pictures from before and after the park was developed so see differences of the aesthetics.</p>

- Interviews with landscape architects working at the office.

## 2.1.2 Methods

### *Content analysis*

The family of methods called content analysis is used to determine if there is a meaning, presence, or relationship of some chosen concepts, patterns, themes, or words in a given qualitative data set (Ejvegård 2012). In this study the method was used to analyse documents, pictures, sketches, notes, and interviews regarding social sustainability and aesthetics from the landscape architect office *Landskapslaget*. The purpose was to explore and investigate if there are any specific patterns or concepts regarding social sustainability and aesthetics in the projects of the office. It emerged that *Landskapslaget* works with social sustainability through four chosen perspectives consisting of *community*, *equality*, *identity*, and *variation*. By using the content analysis method, I could find the four perspectives in all the documents dealing with social sustainability. I could also state that the word aesthetics did not appear in any of the documents. Instead, words such as design, and physical structures were included in descriptions of how to work to promote social sustainability.

### *Semi-structured interviews*

One of the used methods for data collection was semi-structured interviews. In a semi-structured interview, the participants consist of the researcher and one or more individuals (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014). The researcher asks open-ended questions that are based on and guided by an interview guide. The guide should be prepared prior to the interview and the questions should be based on the research intent and existing literature (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014). In this study the participants consisted of me as a researcher, and landscape architects at the office. The guide for this study consisted of one section with general questions about how the office works with sustainability, and one part with questions focusing on sustainability and aesthetics in a particular project (see appendix 1). In this form of interview, the open-ended questions could lead to discussions of new topics, but it still has to cover the original questions. Before the interview, the interviewer must let the interviewee sign a consent form (see appendix 1), to guarantee their participation in the research (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014).

The starting point of collecting data with semi-structured interviews was to include a number of different projects that all were focused on social sustainability. The purpose was to collect as much information as possible about how aesthetic dimensions of a project can promote the social dimensions of sustainability, and to see if it differs between projects.

I did three interviews with architects and landscape architects working at *Landskapslaget*. The first interview was with one architect and two landscape architects working in an early stage in a project about co-creation and reuse, in the city of Jönköping. The second interview was with two landscape architects that in 2019 had worked with including children and young people in a program proposal for Rinkeby's northern city park in Rinkeby in Stockholm. The third interview was with one landscape architect and concerned a revitalization of a park in Flemingsberg in Stockholm, that started in 2016. *Landskapslaget* was commissioned to upgrade the park into a more varied neighbourhood park, and the design was based on two citizen dialogues (Landskapslaget 2023).

The purpose of the interviews was to get more information about how the office thinks one should work with sustainability in projects. It turned out that it was hard to evaluate the outcome of the aesthetics in two of the chosen projects. The project in Jönköping has not been built yet, and the project in Rinkeby has not been followed up by the office. The park in Flemingsberg is older than the other projects and the office has information about the outcome of the design both from people living in the area, and from the police that also has been working with the area. Therefore, the project in Flemingsberg was chosen as a project to study.

## 2.2 Theoretical standpoints

The purpose of the following section is to introduce some key concepts and perspectives that have been guidelines for the analysis of the empirical material. It is from these theoretical standpoints that the questions guiding the analysis of the empirical material have been developed. The concept of aesthetics is broad, and the intention with this thesis is not to define the concept of aesthetics, but to make an attempt to provide a broader view of how aesthetics can promote sustainability. With these three theoretical standpoints, I want to highlight the importance of trying to use the concept of aesthetics in new ways. In the context of the essay, it is about how the concept can promote social sustainability in landscape architecture.

### 2.2.1 Aesthetics and sustainability in landscape architecture

The following chosen texts and concepts are dealing with aesthetics promoting sustainability in landscape architecture. Studying the topic made it clear that there is more written about aesthetics promoting ecological and economic dimensions of sustainability than reports and articles about aesthetics promoting the social dimension of sustainability. Two of the following texts focus on how aesthetics

can promote ecological sustainability, but I argue that the texts are useful for promoting social sustainability as well.

Meyer (2008) discusses the meaning of beauty and aesthetics for sustainability from a landscape architect's point of view. It is emphasised that today's sustainable landscape design lacks when it comes to including aesthetics and beauty as a factor. When talking about sustainability, beauty is seen as a superficial concern. The discussion about sustainability in landscape architecture today is generally based and understood through ecological health, social justice, and economic prosperity.

In the text, Meyer (2008) characterises American landscape architects' attitudes towards sustainability into four categories and presents a fifth alternative which she calls *Sustaining Beauty*. Category number five focuses on aesthetical experiences as a tool for working with sustainability.

Here, I refer to more than pictorial landscapes and pleasant, idealised pastoral scenes. Instead, I am recalling somatic, sensory experiences of places that lead to new awareness of the rhythms and cycles necessary to sustain and regenerate life. These depend on the immediate apprehension of new, unexpected forms, spaces and sequences, and the simultaneous memory of former experiences, and conceptions, of landscape space and form. (Meyer 2008:15)

Meyer (2008) describes how to work with sustaining beauty through a manifesto consisting of eleven categories. The categories describe that sustainable design includes both ecology and culture functions as well as ecology. Meyer (2008) argues that humans experience aesthetics through senses, reason and memories, and the experiences can result in appreciation of new forms. It is pointed out that designing for experiences, is as important as designing for forms and ecosystems, to achieve sustainability because the experiences will make people care for their environment. Meyer (2008) also highlights that landscape design must stand out, draw attention and be site specific to be sustainable. She presents that challenging forms of beauty and aesthetic experiences can change people's environmental ethics, and that it is possible to both design sustainable ecosystems and create awareness for the environment.

It is pointed out that it requires more than designing ecological regenerative landscapes to create a sustainable culture. For a culture to be sustainable, the people in it must become aware and care for how their actions and choices affect landscapes and the environment. This could be achieved by rethinking the role of aesthetic experiences and concepts like beauty. In other words, provoking people and changing the focus on egocentric design perspectives to a more bio-centre perspective. Immersive aesthetic experiences can lead to people caring, feeling empathy, loving, recognizing, and respecting the environment (Meyer 2008).

I believe that works of landscape architecture are more than designed ecosystems, more than strategies for open-ended processes. They are cultural products with distinct forms and experiences that evoke attitudes and feelings through space, sequence, and form. Like literature and art, images and narratives, landscape architecture can play a role in building sustained public support for the environment. (Meyer 2008: 10)

Lehtinen (2021) is, just like Meyer (2008), highlighting that aesthetics today often is being seen as a superficial concern in the context of sustainability and sustainable landscape architecture. In the text it is pointed out that the experience of beauty and judgement of taste can change with changing awareness and knowledge about the environment. Lehtinen (2021) presents the concept *Aesthetic Sustainability* as a tool to give insights into how human aesthetic preferences and human choices can change trend-based consumerism. She argues that aesthetics offers an approach to change attitudes and interests in order to promote sustainable individual and social practices.

In the text, aesthetics refers to both positive and negative qualities as long as they awaken interest. It is referring to qualities people experience, partly as beauty, partly as ugliness, grotesqueness, and disgusting features (Lehtinen 2021). Lehtinen (2021) emphasises that it is important to research both variation in individual and socially aesthetic values to understand why some aesthetics values are trending over long periods, and why some are trending over shorter periods.

The concept of *disinterestedness* has been introduced into aesthetics by Kant (1790/2007: §2) and implies that things are judged aesthetically regardless of any interest one might have in the object. Kant's example is that we can find the palace of a tyrant beautiful, even if we despise the tyrant and tyranny. Meyer (2008) is critical against this notion and would argue that one cannot find the palace beautiful any longer if one has gotten to know it is a tyrant's palace.

Lehtinen (2021) acknowledges this dispute, and chooses a careful formulation to express that things are not as straightforward as it may seem. People have different interests, mindsets and appreciate different aesthetics. When it comes to environmental aesthetics in today's contemporary society, the ecological concerns are making people be aware and care for the aesthetics of the environment (Lehtinen 2021).

People tend to care more for places and environments that they appreciate aesthetically, and due to increasing discussion about experiencing aesthetics Lehtinen (2021) points out that it is likely that methods for measuring positive aesthetics will be developed. The text is primarily focused on how to think and use aesthetics to promote ecological values, but it is also pointed out that ethical



values contribute to several dimensions of sustainability. Both the physical appearance like shape and colour, and the deep-seated understanding of emotions and memories are parts of aesthetic values (Lehtinen 2021).

Aesthetic preferences—or more broadly, taste—are never purely subjective, but are formed in a complex network of personally developed and even biologically determined tendencies to be attracted by something that is intertwined with what is socially valued, acceptable, or avoided. To some extent, the most commonly shared aesthetic preferences seem to reflect the general value ethos of their time. (Lehtinen 2021: 264)

Meyer's (2008) and Lehtinen's (2021) ideas are focused on ecological sustainability, and see aesthetics as a tool for achieving that, by making people be aware and care for their environment. Meyer (2008) highlights the importance of making people care for the environment to achieve a sustainable culture. This can be achieved by rethinking the role of aesthetic experiences and design, to evoke attitudes and feelings. Lehtinen (2021) highlights the importance of studying and researching variations in individual aesthetic values and socially aesthetic values to understand why some landscapes are more valued and sustainable over time. Aesthetics is not merely seen as something superficial, but a way of focusing on bringing together aesthetic, cognitive, and ethical values. To answer the research question of this thesis, it is relevant to include a perspective of how landscape architects can create aesthetic value without the focus on ecology.

Just as Meyer (2008) and Lehtinen (2021), van Etteger, Thompson and Vicenzotti (2016) argue that landscape architectural discourse has tended to avoid ideas about aesthetics during the recent decades. The text highlights that the focus instead has been laid on functional and sustainable design.

Hoping to reach a wider audience, we are thus explicitly addressing the aesthetics of 'landscapes', which implies an exploration of the contributions that landscape architects make to urban renewal, development of new nature, work on infrastructure, flood defences, etc. (van Etteger *et al.* 2016: 81)

van Etteger *et al.* (2016) mention a functionalistic approach and pragmatic design as the most common way for landscape architects to design. The purpose is to provide landscapes that are sustainable and work well. That means less thoughts on the aesthetic aspects, and more focus on for example ecological aspects. While Meyer (2008) and Lehtinen (2021) focus on how aesthetics can promote sustainability, van Etteger *et al.* (2016) highlight the importance of the process in which landscape architects create aesthetic experiences.

The *Aesthetic Creation Theory* (ACT) by the philosopher Nick Zangwill, is proposed as a possible tool to focus on aesthetic experiences in landscape design

(van Etteger *et al.* 2016). The theory can be used to explain how aesthetic experiences are created and puts a big focus on the creator. Aesthetic experiences are not just in the object itself. Instead, they are created in the process involving the creator and the person experiencing the work. The ACT theory removes the distinction between fine art and useful art, and the concept of aesthetics is instead mainly about what is experienced.

The ACT divides aesthetics into non-aesthetic properties and aesthetic properties (see Figure 1). The non-aesthetic properties consist of the elements the creator uses to design a place. Examples of non-aesthetic properties are physical properties as shape and size; secondary, sensory properties as colours and sounds; and semantic or representational properties as meaning. What comes out from that are the aesthetic properties consisting of verdictive or evaluative aesthetic properties as beauty and ugliness, substantive aesthetic properties as elegance, sadness, passion, and awkwardness, that affect people on an emotional level (van Etteger *et al.* 2016).

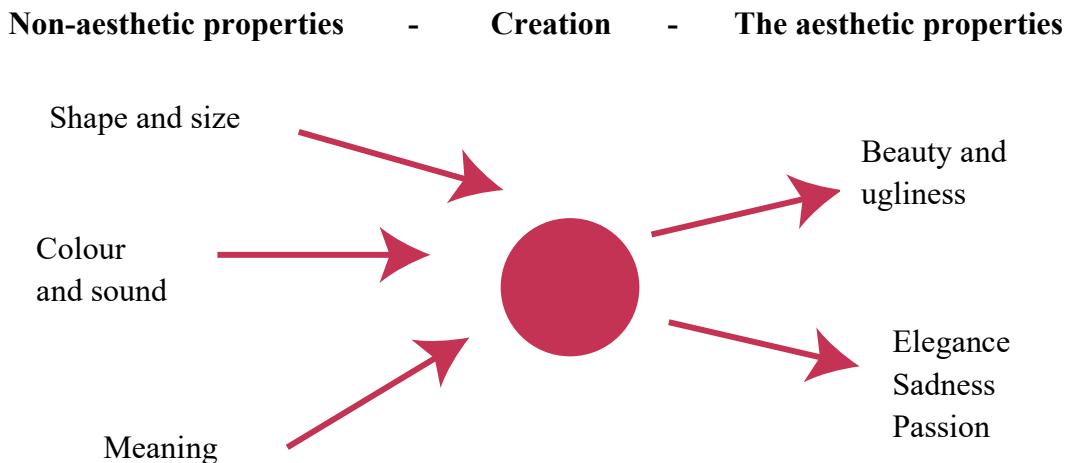


Figure 1. Figure showing the division between non-aesthetic properties and aesthetic properties in the ACT theory, illustration made by author.

van Etteger *et al.* (2016) explain that Zangwill’s definition of ‘art’ implies that someone had an intention with a design and that art is created when that person uses chosen non-aesthetic properties to create aesthetic properties;

Zangwill’s theory allows us to see landscape architecture (once again) as an art - yet without the lofty aspirations and pretensions of art for art’s sake and with the explicit possibility of considering useful aspects; for example, social inclusion or ecological performance. We think that the insights provided can add to both substantive and procedural theory in landscape architecture (cp. Lang 1987) as they provide knowledge on how creating aesthetic value

might work and what landscape architects can do to improve the aesthetic quality of their work. (van Etteger *et al.* 2016: 90)

According to van Etteger *et al.* (2016), the theory can also provide knowledge of the outcome of a design in landscape architecture. According to the theory, plans and drawings that are made before the actual work is done can be used to predict aesthetical effects. By reflecting over whether the non-aesthetic properties will contribute to the desired effects before the actual work is done, one can later reflect over the outcome. This implies that it is possible to distinguish between the intentional and unintentional aesthetic properties. Applying the theory in landscape design provides a tool for reflecting over and predicting aesthetical effects in landscape architecture (van Etteger *et al.* 2016).

Meyer (2008) and Lehtinen (2021) have a focus on how aesthetics can contribute to a sustainable development and contribute to an environmental concern in society, and that aesthetics can motivate people to care for the environment and the earth. van Etteger *et al.* (2016) do not say that the aesthetic dimensions are the only important part in landscape architecture. They want to present a critical approach to how the discipline looks today and are taking aesthetics fully into account to make justice for the complete works of landscape architecture.

van Etteger *et al.* (2016) argue that Zangwill's theory is in line with Meyer's (2008) idea that art, sustainability, and functionality are connected and can promote each other, and are, just like Meyer (2008), suggesting that beauty matters to dimensions of sustainability. Unlike Meyer, van Etteger *et al.* (2016) believe that aesthetical experiences should be understood in a less instrumental way. The aesthetical experiences could be acknowledged for its own. For example, a person can experience aesthetic appreciation from the colours in an environment characterised by environmental destruction. Lehtinen (2021) brings up the importance of positive and negative qualities as long as they awaken an interest for the environment but means that people tend to care more for things they appreciate aesthetically. It is also pointed out that the most shared aesthetic preferences seem to reflect the general value *ethos* of their time.

### 2.2.2 Aesthetics and social sustainability

The aim with this thesis is not to explain the concept of sustainability, but to add insights for a broader view on sustainability in landscape architecture. In the following part, the importance of working for social sustainability through urban planning in Sweden is emphasised.

The United Nations has developed the Global Goals and the 2030 Agenda with the aim of creating sustainable development. Sustainable development is explained as a way of meeting the needs of the present without ruining future generations (FN-förbundet n.d.):

Sustainable development means that we meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs. This means that we must live in a way today that means that future generations should be able to have the same opportunities as we do.

The three dimensions of sustainable development, i.e., the economic, social and environmental dimensions, were an important starting point in the development of the global goals. The three perspectives permeate the goals of creating sustainable, inclusive and equitable development for all. (FN-förbundet n.d.)

One could question if it is possible to divide and distinguish different dimensions of sustainability. The three dimensions of economic, social, and ecological sustainability are used in the terms of sustainable cities, both on a global and a national level, and therefore also used in this thesis. How to use architecture, design, and aesthetics to develop sustainable cities can be seen from economic, social, and ecological perspectives.

The Swedish Ministry of Finance (2021) maps methods and tools to illustrate social values in urban development and argue that social sustainability is a dynamic and contextual concept that does not have a constant definition. When working with social sustainability in urban planning, it is important to base choices of changes on the specific site's characteristics, conditions, and needs, during a certain period of time. Different actors will define the concept of social sustainability in different ways (The Swedish Ministry of Finance 2021).

It is stated that planning and urban development can contribute to social sustainability through the process and through the final result. Including citizen participation and implementing a citizen dialogue in a planning process, can contribute with social values like equality, inclusion, participation, and trust (The Swedish Ministry of Finance 2021). Examples of how planning and urban development can contribute to this are to plan for closeness to public service, recreation and collective traffic, outdoor environment for places to meet, and to minimise mental and social barriers by creating safe and attractive ways to cross physical barriers such as roads (The Swedish Ministry of Finance 2021). The Swedish Ministry of Finance (2021) points out that it is necessary to coordinate planning and urban development with structural interventions to achieve social sustainability.

There is a need to investigate and strengthen the competence in how to translate social sustainability to physical appearance (Swedish Ministry of Finance 2021). It is emphasised that architects have knowledge in how this translation can be done. One example is to use the principles *backstage*, *on stage* and *off stage*. It describes how people use a sports field or a park. People who know the game or the sport can be *on stage*, people that want to try the activity can do it more separately, *backstage*, and people that do not want to do the activity can sit beside and do something else, *off stage*. Swedish Ministry of Finance (2021) argues that these principles create possibilities for different target groups to be on the same spot. The importance of spreading the knowledge about translation of social sustainability to physical appearance is pointed out. It is important that everyone, from clients to architects, as well as other actors, learn about this translation (Swedish Ministry of Finance 2021). In this context the design and urban planning refers to spatial organisation that could be given different forms, and people's experiences of aesthetics are not being mentioned.

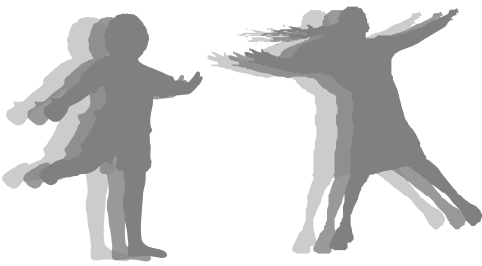
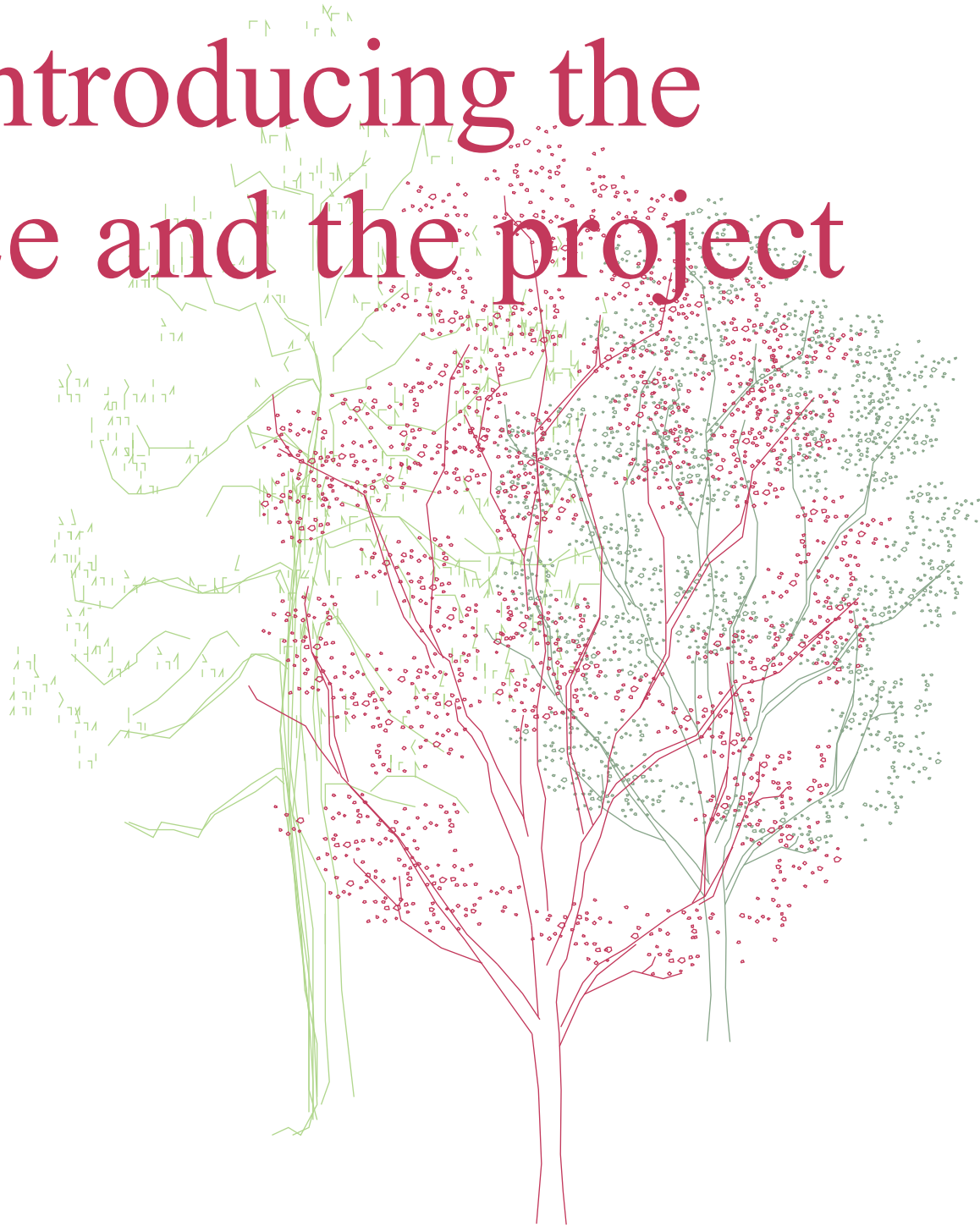
### 2.2.3 Analytical framework

To summarise, there is a global and national demand for how to use aesthetics and design as a tool for developing sustainable cities. From a landscape architect's point of view, the ideas on aesthetics by Lehtinen (2021), Meyer (2008) and van Etteger *et al.* are all interesting. Lehtinen (2021) and Meyer (2008) have a focus on how aesthetics can contribute to a sustainable development by making people feel and care for nature. van Etteger *et al.* focus on the importance of aesthetics in landscape architecture and present Zangwill's theory as a tool to explain how aesthetic experiences are created.

Through the three texts it is possible to understand that aesthetics is defined differently. van Etteger *et al.* (2016), and Meyer (2008) argue that art, sustainability, and functionality are connected and can promote each other. They mean that beauty matters to dimensions of sustainability, but van Etteger *et al.* (2016) believe that aesthetical experiences should be understood in a less instrumental way than Meyer (2008), and that the aesthetical experiences could be acknowledged for its own. Lehtinen (2021) brings up the importance of positive and negative qualities as long as they awaken an interest for the environment but means that people tend to care more for things they appreciate aesthetically. Lehtinen (2021) also points out that the most shared aesthetic preferences seem to reflect the general value *ethos* of their time. Through the three perspectives, I state that aesthetics can be connected both to things we appreciate and things we do not appreciate. The three theoretical standpoints will be used as a starting point in my analysis. I will assume that sustainable or successful aesthetics do not have to mean that everyone thinks the aesthetic choices are beautiful. By studying a

landscape architect project which is seen as a project that have succeeded to create social sustainability, it might be possible to understand more about the choices of aesthetics that made the project successful.

# Introducing the office and the project



## 3. Introducing the office and the project

To answer the research question, *In what way does Landskapslaget work with aesthetics in a project in order to promote the social sustainability dimensions?*, the landscape architect and urban planning office *Landskapslaget*, and their work with Flemingsbergsparken was investigated in the study. Flemingsbergsparken was chosen because it is one of *Landskapslaget*'s projects in which the landscape architects have worked with social processes and citizen dialogues as a method for designing the park.

### 3.1 The landscape architect office

*Landskapslaget* was founded in 1973 and is one of Sweden's largest independent urban planning and landscape architect offices. They describe their work as working with landscape architecture and urban construction in a way that develops the city as a functional and attractive living environment. During the past eight years they have worked on formulating how they define and should work with sustainability. The people working at *Landskapslaget* have developed an approach of how to work with contemporary challenges when developing cities. This approach is called D.A.F (*Det Allmänna Först*), *The Common First*, and is used to put extra focus on ecological, economic, and social aspects of urban development (*Landskapslaget* n.d.c).

*Landskapslaget*'s sustainability work in a timeline (*Landskapslaget* n.d.a):

In **2015**, *Landskapslaget* began to think about how they define sustainability. In a market-driven industry, short-term financial gains can weigh more than long-term social and ecological ones, and it can therefore be difficult to monitor sustainability issues.

In **2016**, *Landskapslaget* launched a plan to work with sustainability. It consisted of:

- Explore the theme D.A.F (*Det Allmänna Först*), *The Common First*.
- Exchange experiences with colleagues in the office.
- Raise the sustainability bar within projects.



The team working at *Landskapslaget* was divided into groups to investigate themes such as circular design, dialogue processes, stormwater management, the dense green city and social sustainability in urban planning.

In **2017** and **2018**, the office began to describe services that offer customers social and ecological added values.

In **2019**, D.A.F was incorporated into project routines and the approach was formulated as a manifesto divided into five points.

The manifesto:

- The public is everyone's:

The public is made up of our public spaces, our ecosystems, the air we breathe. Our right to be and to be ourselves. There are systems, structures, places, habitats for everyone. It is democracy and justice. That is what we all have the right to and responsibility for. Together.

- Without nature we are nothing:

Man is dependent on nature's benefits. Ecological habitats are a prerequisite for our survival. And for it to work, we must work together in that fabric, that network with a diversity of species and biotopes that make the city richer and more alive. With a living infrastructure, we get a living city.

- Social-ecological urban development is the solution:

In the living city, we start from existing values and both ecological and social conditions. For a (well) designed living environment is a result of nature-based solutions and social value creation where the public first gets to rule.

- Everyone benefits from putting the public first:

The public and the private are both strong forces that need to exist and be balanced. With the public first, both nature, people and the economy win through the creation of shared values. Values that everyone cherishes.

- Common values, common world:

When we put the public first, when we involve future users, when we work with the ecosystems, then we create common values and conditions for community, trust, participation, confidence and faith in the future. It is also when we get a common and functioning world. (*Landskapslaget* 2019).

After **2019**, *Landskapslaget* continued to immerse themselves in the work D.A.F, first by creating an image strategy and an image and graphics book. By

strengthening a visual identity in external communication, the idea was to strengthen how to bring out sustainability dimensions in images in projects (Landskapslaget n.d.a).

### 3.2 Study project - Flemingsbergsparken (a neighbourhood park in Flemingsberg)

In 2016, *Landskapslaget* was commissioned to upgrade a park in Flemingsberg in Stockholm (see Figure 2.1), into a more varied neighbourhood park. The design was based on two citizen dialogues. The first citizen dialogue resulted in a program proposal for the park that was shown to the residents in a second dialogue. After revision, *Landskapslaget* designed the park together with an artist, a structural engineer, and a lighting designer (Landskapslaget n.d.b).

Flemingsbergsparken is located in Grantorp which is situated between neighbourhoods with different socioeconomic conditions (Visättra, Kästa, Tullinge) (see Figure 2.2) (Landskapslaget n.d.b).

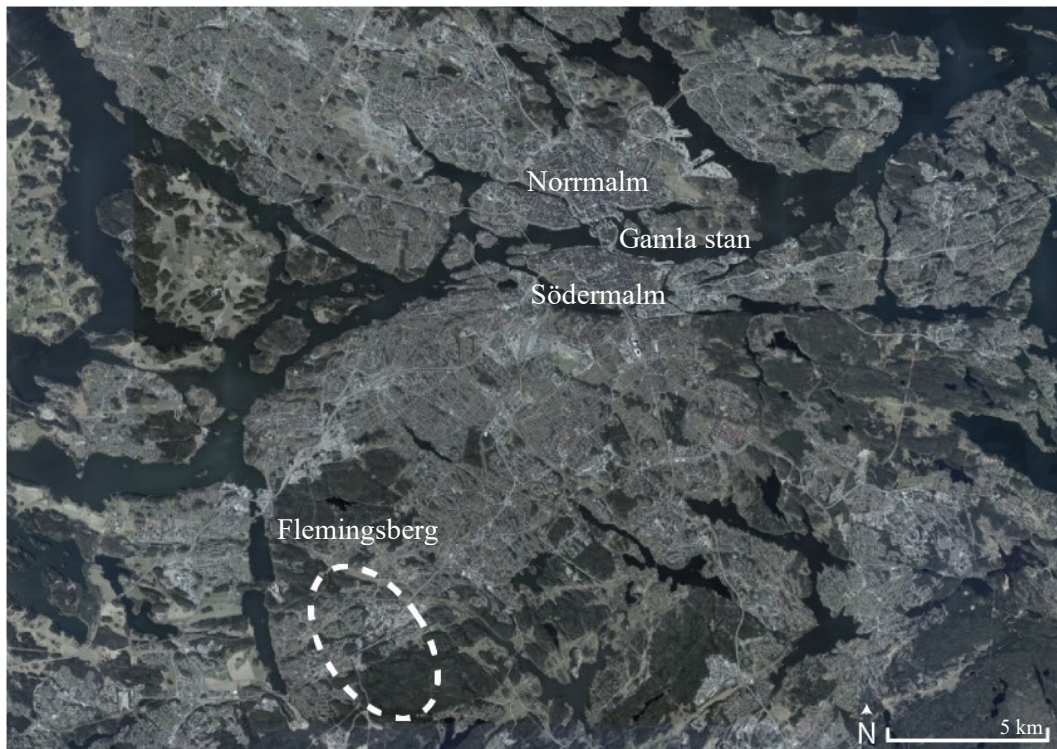


Figure 2.1 Map showing the location of Flemingsberg (marked with the white line) in relation to Stockholm City. Aerial photograph from © Lantmäteriet - edited by author.



Figure 2.2 Map showing the location of Flemingsbergsparken (marked with the white line), and the surrounding neighbourhoods. Aerial photograph from © Lantmäteriet - edited by author.

The western part of Flemingsberg, Grantorp, is an area which is characterised by eighteen colourful high-rise buildings (see Figure 3). They were built as a part of the affordable housing initiative *Miljonprogrammet*, and the artist Gert Marcus got the task to propose colours for the houses. Today the buildings are painted in fifteen different colours ranging from green to blue and from red to yellow. People living in the area today are proud of the colours, and how they distinguish Grantorp (Landskapslaget n.d.b).



*Figure 3. Some of the colourful houses in Flemingsberg. Source: Landskapslaget.*

Grantorp is an area affected by high population density which makes outdoor meeting spaces important. As mentioned, the area is located between neighbourhoods with different socioeconomic conditions, and people living in the neighbourhoods do not move between the areas much. The municipality hoped that through the park, people from different socio-economic backgrounds would mix, which they consider socially sustainable and desirable. For that reason, the municipality had the aim to develop parts of Grantorp to pleasant places in the public space, and a district-wide target destination (Landskapslaget n.d.b).

Two citizen dialogues that the landscape architect office HORN.UGGLA were performed for the project. It turned out that the park was frequently used which had contributed to wear and tear. The first one had the aim to understand what people wanted from an overall perspective. A plan over proposals for changes in the area was shown to the citizens (see Figure 4). Focus was first on the whole area of Grantorp, but when talking to the citizens, the focus changed to only regarding Flemingsbergsparken.

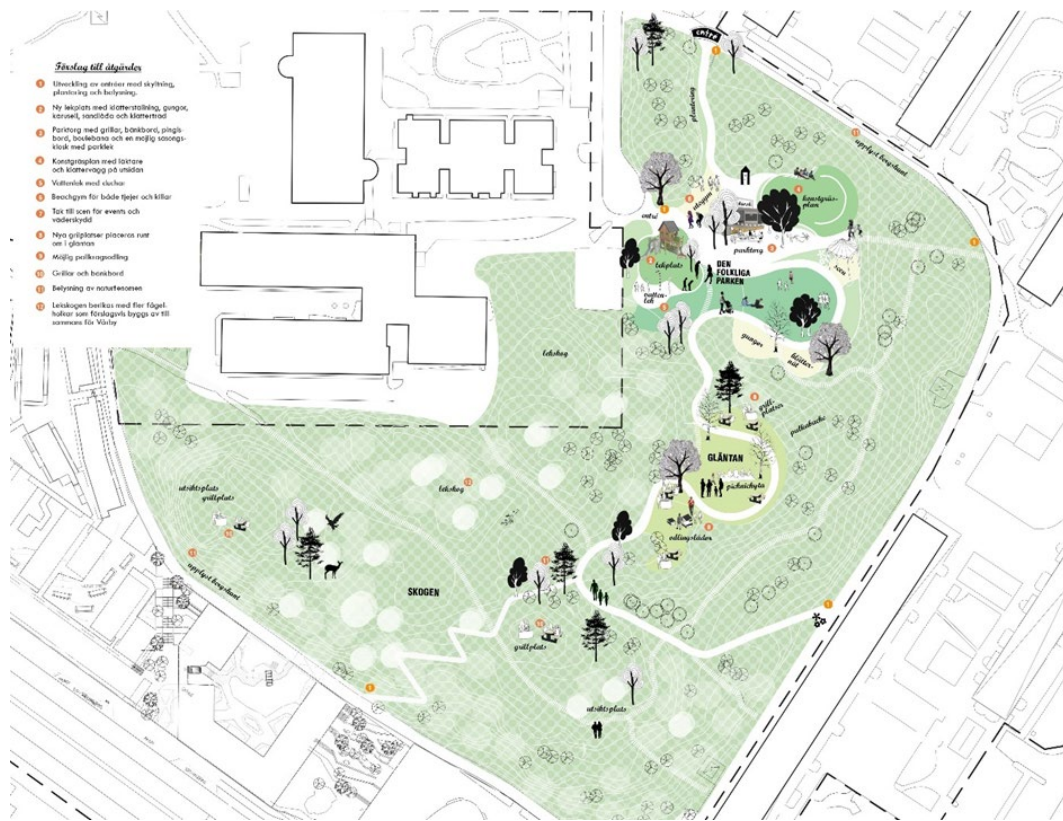


Figure 4. The plan that was shown for the citizens in the first dialogue. Source: Landskapslaget.

The second dialogue was made as an event with food trucks and information about the project. A program sketch that was done after the first dialogue was set up and people had the possibility to contribute with their views and opinions. *Landskapslaget* got access to all the information from the citizen dialogues when making the design (*Landskapslaget n.d.b*).

After gathering the opinions and ideas from the second dialogue it turned out that the park was used extensively by the residents of the area, especially during summer, and that the colours of the houses are appreciated. It turned out that people in the area wished for the park to contain outdoor places to grill, and places for meetings in large groups. It also emerged that the park was characterised by insecurity because of darkness, violence and vehicles that drove through it. With the intention to create a living room with a party theme and colours, the concept took its stand in a people-friendly park and landed in the concept *amusement park* (*Landskapslaget n.d.b*).

The result is a park square with a bowling alley, benches, showers, barbecues, long tables, and a large playground, and next to it a dance floor, barbecue area, multi-sport track, a slope for sledding and outdoor gym. *Landskapslaget*

constructed a fence with the concept of an amusement park together with the artist Linda Bäckström. The colours of the houses around the park were appreciated by the residents, and inspired a colour palette that complemented the houses and gave the feeling of a people's park. The colours were also used on the equipment in the park. *Landskapslaget* collaborated with *BLACK light design* and created a playful lighting scheme with park posts for light bathing (see Figure 5), and a ceiling of lanterns above the park square (see Figure 6) (*Landskapslaget* n.d.b).

*Landskapslaget* describes the future park:

By creating space for play, exercise, meetings, and events in Flemingsbergsparken, it will hopefully become a neighbourhood park that both promotes public health, creates social cohesion, and strengthens the place's identity and the value of both old and new housing in central Flemingsberg.<sup>2</sup> (*Landskapslaget* n.d.b)



Figure 5. Playful lightning in the shape of park spots for lighbathing. Source: *Landskapslaget*.

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<sup>2</sup> The quote in Swedish: Genom att skapa utrymme för lek, motion, möten och event i Flemingsbergsparken blir den förhoppningsvis en stadsdelspark som både främjar folkhälsa, skapar social sammanhållning och stärker platsens identitet och värdet för både gamla och nya bostäder i centrala Flemingsberg.



*Figure 6. The fence and the sign with the amusement park theme. The ceiling of lanterns above the park square is also shown. Source: Landskapslaget.*

With the finished proposal, spaces were created for events, play, exercise and meetings, and the design contains different rooms with different tempos. It consists partly of areas for activity, celebration, and community, partly for seclusion, tranquillity, and the presence of nature. The residents wanted the forest to be left untouched, so the only thing that changed there were additional barbecue areas. The forest secures, supports, and regulates ecosystem services as it can continue to be the habitat of animals, promote good air quality, and dampen noise (see Figure 7) (Landskapslaget n.d.b).

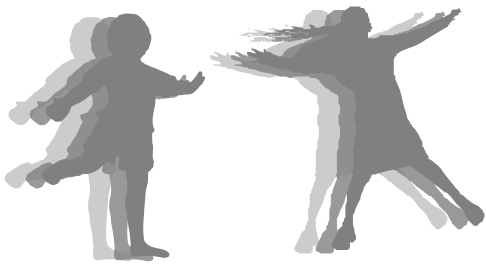
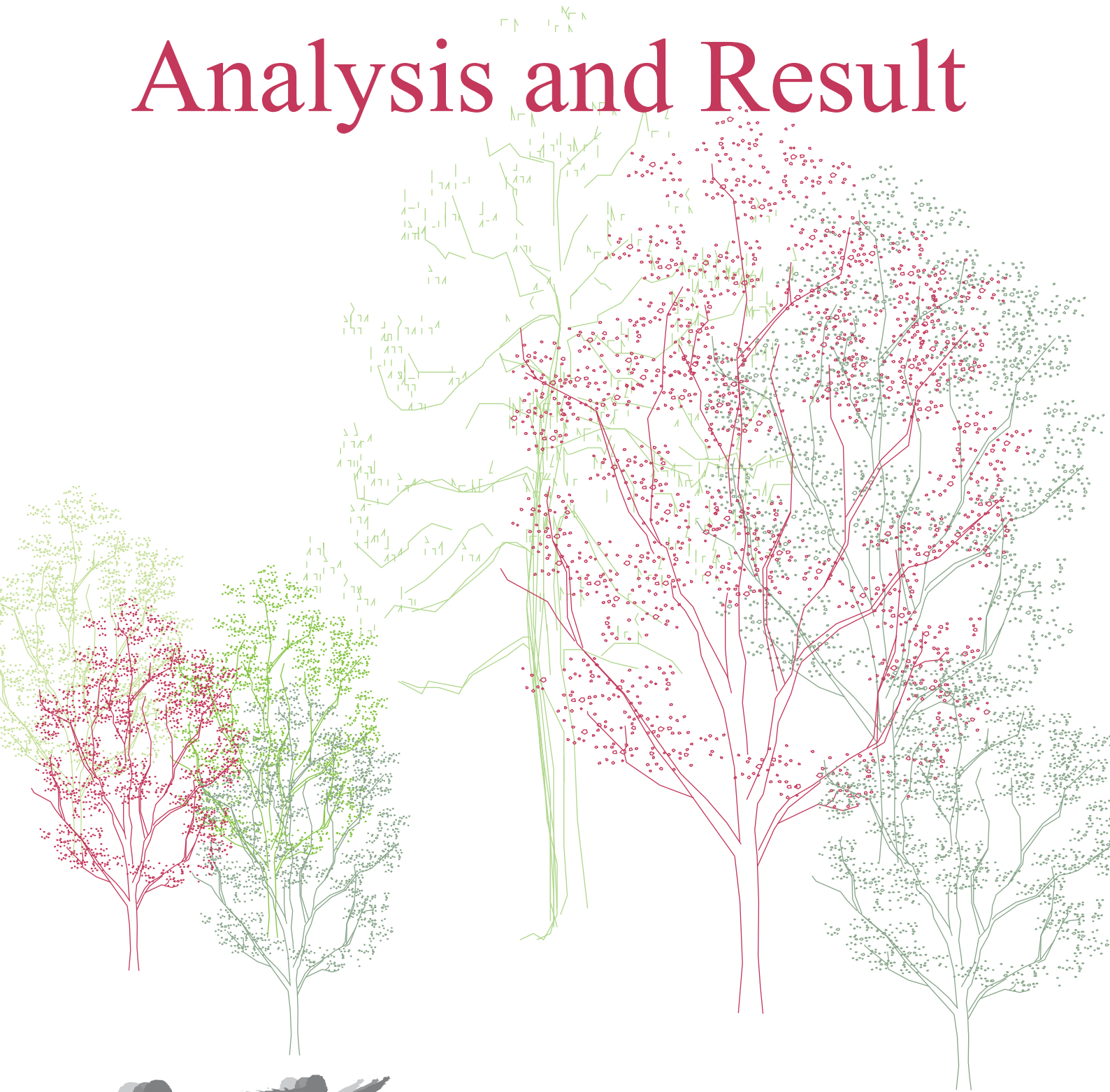


Figure 7. The finished proposal for Flemingsbergsparken – edited and translated from Swedish to English by author. Source: Landskapslaget.

Flemingsbergsparken won Huddinge municipality's building award in 2021. It was appointed by politicians in the municipal board's community development committee and voted as the winner by the residents in Huddinge (HUDDINGEEXTRA 2021).



# Analysis and Result



## 4. Analysis and Result

The purpose of the following section is to analyse material from *Landskapslaget* together with the result from the interview with a landscape architect who worked with Flemingsbergsparken, to explore how the landscape architects have used aesthetics with the intent to promote social sustainability. In the analysis, I will apply the three theoretical standpoints to try to use the concept of aesthetics in a broader way. It is important to point out that the concept of aesthetics can have different meaning in different contexts, and that one part of the purpose with this thesis is to try to understand how *Landskapslaget* understands it.

### 4.1 Landskapslaget's definition of social sustainability in urban design

In the study, the method content-analysis was used to analyse documents, pictures, sketches, and notes from *Landskapslaget*. The purpose is to explore and identify how the landscape architect office works with sustainability and aesthetics in their project. In the following section findings from *Landskapslaget's* work with social dimensions of sustainability have been compiled.

#### 4.1.1 Summary of *Landskapslaget's* position

In the process of creating D.A.F and their manifesto, *Landskapslaget* worked with different topics of sustainability, gathering the information in internal information sheets, which were distributed to all employees. One of the titles were social sustainability in urban design, where social sustainability is defined as everyone's equal access to the city's common locations and resources. In terms of urban design and development, social sustainability means equal living conditions in all parts of a city. Some guidelines concern civic participation, general justice, social justice, and trust (Landskapslaget n.d.e).

We define social sustainability as everyone's equal access to the city's common places and resources. In urban planning, social sustainability means equal living conditions in the public space in the different parts of the city. Starting points for social sustainability can include

generational justice, social justice, trust, and civic participation. Environments must simply work for all people who will use them regardless of gender, age, religion, socio-economic background, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability.<sup>3</sup> (Landskapslaget n.d.e: 1)

The work with social sustainability in urban planning and development is important because the common urban life contains places where people who do not have any obvious things in common, occasionally will meet. *Landskapslaget* argues that the prerequisite for our democracy is that people meet and see each other to accept and understand each other. The shape and design of the physical environment can therefore provide conditions for safety, social relations between people, and promote meetings between groups in society (Landskapslaget n.d.e).

Another title was dialogue processes. In this sheet it is pointed out that participation in the process can lead to a greater understanding of the development and feeling of togetherness and pride for the place. *Landskapslaget* argues that the process is as important as the result. For a successful dialogue process, it is necessary that the dialogue takes place at an early stage when it is still possible to influence the outcome, and that there is feedback between the parties at the end of the process (Landskapslaget n.d.d).

*Democratic and socio-economic gains* - Being able to participate in the design/use of the city's space maintains democracy and people's participation in and trust in society's processes. Participation and the possibility of influence counteracts exclusion and segregation.

*Contributes to local responsibility* - Participation can create a sense of belonging and pride for the place/area. A shared story is created.

*Legitimizes and anchors decisions/ Knowledge building between parties* - Creates understanding of the place and its existing values. Identifies valuable places and unique stories. Understanding of changes, why projects must be carried out, which interests are in conflict with each other.<sup>4</sup> (Landskapslaget n.d.d: 1)

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<sup>3</sup> The quote in Swedish: Social hållbarhet definierar vi som allas jämlika tillgång till stadens gemensamma platser och resurser. Inom stadsbyggandet innebär social hållbarhet likvärdiga livsvillkor i det offentliga rummet i stadens olika delar.

Utgångspunkter för social hållbarhet kan innefatta generationsrättvisa, social rättvisa, tillit och medborgerligt deltagande. Miljöer ska helt enkelt fungera för alla människor som ska använda dem oavsett kön, ålder, religion, socioekonomisk bakgrund, etnicitet, sexuell läggning eller funktionsnedsättning.

<sup>4</sup> The quote in Swedish: Demokratiska och socioekonomiska vinster - Att kunna vara delaktig i utformandet/ användandet av stadens rum upprätthåller demokrati och människors delaktighet i och tillit till samhällets processer. Delaktighet och möjlighet till påverkan motverkar utanförskap och segregation.

Bidrar till lokalt ansvarstagande - Delaktighet kan skapa samhörighet med och stolthet för platsen/området. En gemensam berättelse skapas.

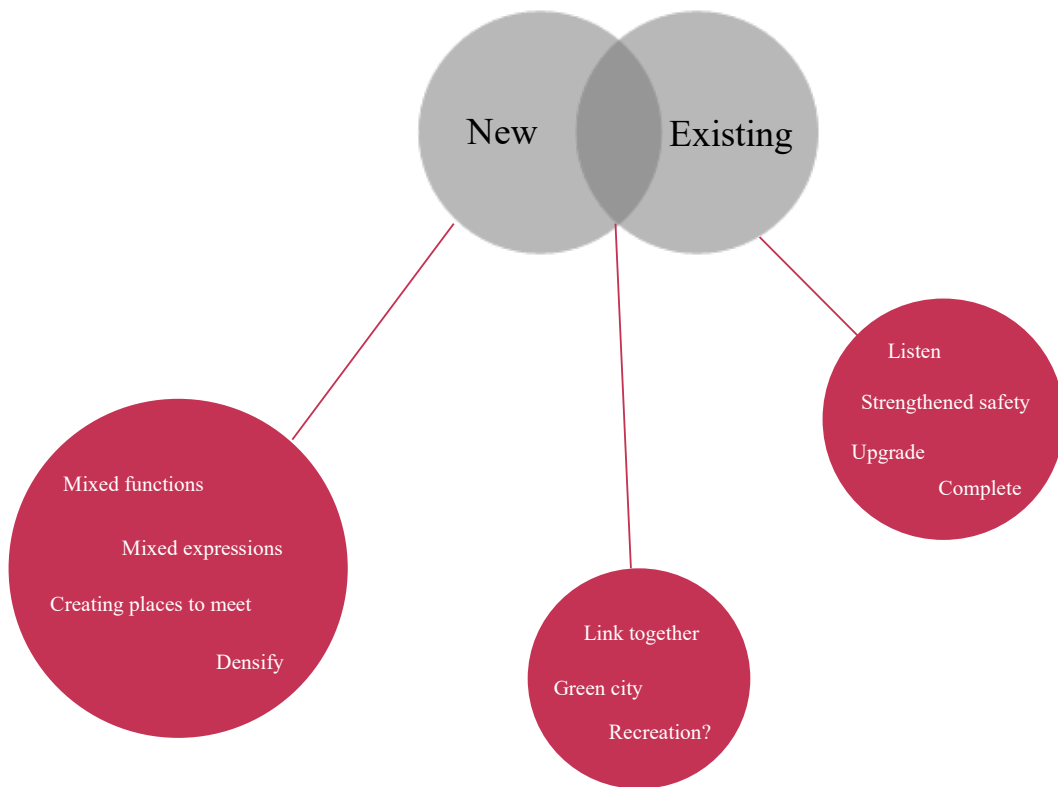


Figure 8. Combine new and existing. Source: Landskapslaget n.d.e, page 1. Edited and translated from Swedish to English by the author.

*Landskapslaget* highlights the combination between existing and new elements to achieve social sustainability (see Figure 8). It represents the importance of looking at the existing parts of a place and to listen to what the people spending time there think about it when developing a new design. *Landskapslaget* writes about four perspectives, through which social sustainability can be integrated in their work.

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Legitimerar och förankrar beslut/ Kunskapsbyggande mellan parter - Skapar förståelse för platsen och dess befintliga värden. Identifierar värdefulla platser och unika berättelser. Förståelse för förändringar, varför projekt måste genomföras, vilka intressen som står mot varandra. (Landskapslaget n.d.d: 1)

They consist of *community*, *equality*, *identity*, and *variation*, and are concluded below (see Figure 9) (Landskapslaget n.d.e).

- *Community* - To work with strengthening a socially cohesive city in which the spatial and social context overlap for people with different backgrounds to meet. This can be done by for example developing walkways that strengthen neighbourhoods, creating places that bring together people from different districts and creating local meeting points for people living in a specific area to establish places for togetherness and participation.
- *Equality* - To create cities for everyone in which people living in the cities have the same equal access to functions like service and workplaces. The goal is to create an accessible city, where it exists neutral common places where all kinds of people can be.
- *Identity* - To work with architectural characters of a place and how people identify with it. When working with this, it is important to see to the user's vision, thoughts and opinions and not only the architect's. To achieve this, people and stakeholders must be included in the process and the decisions. This could contribute with pride and a sense of belonging for the users of the place.
- *Variation* - To create a mixed city and flexible places with variation in character. A specific place should contain both programmed and unprogrammed places with different tempos to suit different people.

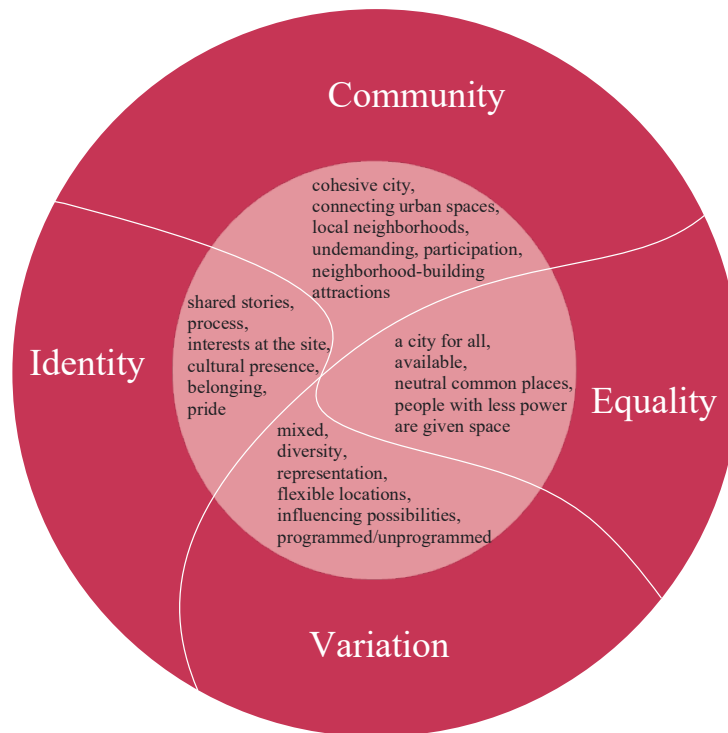


Figure 9. Four perspectives of social sustainability. Source: *Landskapslaget n.d.e*, page 1. Edited and translated from Swedish to English by the author.

#### 4.1.2 Analysis and the three themes

After studying the documents about social sustainability, it was clear that it is possible to find traces of the four perspectives in all of them, and I argue that the four perspectives are concluding and representing how *Landskapslaget* wants to work with social sustainability. To conclude the information from the documents, *Landskapslaget* argues that to achieve social sustainability in urban design, people should have equal access to the city's common locations and resources, and equal living conditions in all parts of a city. The shape and design of the physical environment can provide conditions for safety and social relations between people. When people are allowed to participate in the design and use of places in the city, democracy and people's trust in society's processes are maintained.

It is interesting that the documents contain examples of how the physical structure can contribute to social sustainability, but the word aesthetic is not mentioned in any of the documents. This may indicate that *Landskapslaget* does not have a clear definition of what aesthetics means. In this context it is relevant to, just as van Etteger *et al.* (2016) argue, present the theory ACT as a tool to focus on aesthetic experiences. What are the choices of non-aesthetic properties in a project, and is it possible to understand what aesthetic properties that comes out?

With the starting point in *Landskapslaget*'s four perspectives of how to work with social sustainability and with the aim to use the concept of aesthetics in a broader way, I have developed three themes for analysing Flemingsbergparken.

### 1. Identity

*Landskapslaget* highlights the importance of how people identify with architectural characters of a place to create pride and a sense of belonging for the users. When working with this, it is important to see to the user's vision, thoughts, and opinions. Flemingsbergsparken consist of aesthetic elements (as colours, materials, and shapes) which is based on co-design, and which in turn has contributed to a clear concept for the park. The first theme is based on one identified assumption that drives and motivates *Landskapslaget*, namely they assume that *Co-design makes possible aesthetic experiences that emphasise a shared identity*.

### 2. Variation

It is pointed out that social sustainability in a specific place requires variation in tempos and programmed areas to suit different people. One can question if these types of variations only regard function and not aesthetics. Bringing in the ACT theory, the choices of non- aesthetic properties can be physical properties as shape and size, but they can also be secondary, sensory properties as colour and sound, and representational properties such as meaning. The concept of aesthetics is in this way used in a different meaning compared to the first theme. From this point of view, variation can also be seen as aesthetics, which is why the second theme is *Aesthetics can bridge different needs and preferences*.

### 3. Community and Equality

Community and equality are together the base for the third theme. Community can, according to *Landskapslaget*, be achieved by developing walkways and lights that make people feel safe in a certain area. It is done with the purpose to strengthening a socially cohesive city in which the spatial and social context overlap for people with different backgrounds to meet. Equality is achieved when one manages to create spaces for everyone. Both perspectives are focused on developing places and areas that different people want to spend their time in. The municipality of Huddinge had the aim to change Flemingsbergsparken to a safe place for everyone which would attract people from all the surrounding neighbourhoods and contribute to a more cohesive city. Meyer (2008) and Lehtinen (2021) see aesthetics as a tool for achieving ecological sustainability by making people be aware and care for their environment. *Landskapslaget*'s practice is based on a theory of aesthetic sustainability that also includes the social

dimension of sustainability. The design and aesthetics of Flemingsbergsparken are chosen through co-design and for increasing the safety and equality by developing the walkways and the aesthetics of the lights. The third theme is therefore *Aesthetics for strengthening a cohesive city*.

## 4.2 Aesthetics and social sustainability

The work with Flemingsbergsparken started before *Landskapslaget* had finalised their manifesto about how to implement D.A.F in their work, but during the same period that the manifesto was created. Interplays between social sustainability and the physical environment were therefore being discussed during the same time as the process of the work with Flemingsbergsparken. During the interview, it was mentioned that the work with ecological, economic, and social sustainability had been steering *Landskapslaget's* projects for many years, but that the focus increased during this period of time. The following part contains analyses of the relevant findings from the content-analysis and the interviews divided into the three themes.

### 4.2.1 Co-design makes possible aesthetic experiences that emphasise a shared identity

The first theme emphasises aesthetics and co-creation in terms of shape, material, and colours of the park divided into three sub-themes.

#### *The concept*

During the interview, the landscape architect explained that the municipality had the aim to develop Flemingsbergsparken to a pleasant place in the public space, and after the second dialogue it turned out that people thought the park was boring, dark, and unsafe. It was not an area that people liked or did spend their time in. People also expressed that they felt as if no one cared about the park, and therefore not for the people living in the area either. *Landskapslaget* worked together with an artist and discussed what it is that makes you proud of a place. How do you design for the place to stand out, create identity and elevate Flemingsberg? Just as *Landskapslaget* highlights in their perspective *Identity* it was important to include the citizens in the process. They concluded that something that could be identified with Flemingsberg was needed for this inclusion. Through the second citizen dialogue it became apparent that the colours of the buildings in Flemingsberg are appreciated and something that the citizens wished to implement in the park as well. *Landskapslaget* wanted to create a concept for the park based on the wishes of implementing the colours of the houses and the importance of being able to spend time in the park. With the



intention to create a living room with a party theme and colours, the concept took its stand in a people-friendly park and landed in the concept amusement park (see Figure 10 and 11).



Figure 10. An overview of Flemingsbergsparken. Source: Landskapslaget.

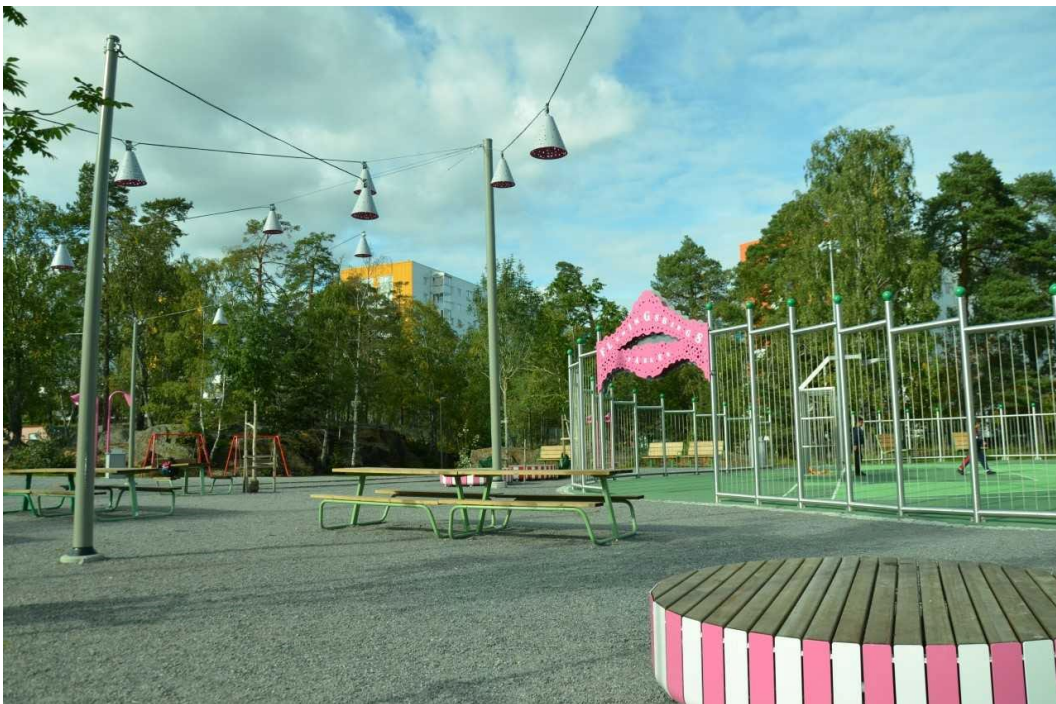


Figure 11. Striped pouffes strengthening the concept amusement park. Source: Landskapslaget.

### *Colour palette*

The colour palette consists of the colours of the buildings and a pink accent colour that is meant to represent the colour of the park (see Figure 12). During the interview the landscape architect highlighted that a theme like the amusement park can easily become too dominant. In this project they chose to work with the accent colour on the verticals, toned down the ground covering and made some of the furniture and smaller details like the knobs on the fence in green tones (see Figure 13).

The citizen dialogue made it clear that people wanted colours and places to meet. It is not possible to understand a place through one site visit, but it helps to understand by talking to people, and hearing their opinions and values. The citizen dialogues made it clear that it was important for social sustainability to create something that people can be proud of. (Landscape architect at *Landskapslaget* 2023)



*Figure 12. The sign and the striped pouffe have the accent colour pink. Source: Landskapslaget.*



Figure 13. One example of how the ground covering is green and the verticals stand out. Source: *Landskapslaget*.

#### *Making Flemingsbergsparken stand out*

*Landskapslaget* did not have a big budget for the project, and they had to consider what was important to prioritise. Just as Meyer (2008) argues *Landskapslaget* wanted the design to be sustainable by making it stand out. They decided to use inexpensive playground equipment and focused on making it draw attention with colours and forms. They decided to put more money into some larger structures that would contribute extra to the concept amusement park. This resulted in a big sign with the name Flemingsbergsparken, and a stage to highlight the notion of the amusement park (see Figure 14). The sign is in the pink accent colour and placed in the centre of the park. It is supposed to remind of and contribute to the feeling of being in Flemingsbergsparken. The stage is also a part of making the park attract attention and to contribute to the feeling that something unexpected could happen here (see Figure 15). It provides Wi-Fi and possibilities for music, play and performances. The roof is painted in several colours and the floor has the pattern of sprinkles on an ice cream.

We wanted Flemingsbergsparken to stand out and, at the same time, identify and elevate Flemingsberg. We were lucky to be able to work with an artist. How to physically concretize social values and give it an aesthetic shape is not obvious. With help from the artist, we pushed our work with shapes and colours further, and it resulted in a different and distinctive concept. (Landscape architect at *Landskapslaget* 2023)



Figure 14. The sign with the name Flemingsbergsparken on it. Source: Landskapslaget.



Figure 15. The stage. Source: Landskapslaget.

### *Conclusion theme one*

Co-design is giving insight into what the people living in a specific area think are important. In this project the landscape architects strived to use aesthetics to

create a park that stands out, represents Flemingsberg and which is something for people in Flemingsberg to be proud of. In this theme, aesthetics is defined as something we experience through our eyes.

### 4.2.2 Aesthetics can bridge different needs and preferences

The second theme emphasises aesthetics in terms of different preferences of activities and functions. It is divided into two sub-themes.

#### *Different tempos*

A lot of opinions and wishes from the citizen dialogue were connected to social value creation. People described Flemingsbergsparken as an area that they did not like to be in. They wished for a place to meet other people, and therefore, *Landskapslaget* aimed to create an outdoor living room (see Figure 16 and 17). Some people wished for places to meet in large groups, and some for spots where one could sit alone, so the area therefore was programmed to contain different tempos. Just as *Landskapslaget* highlights in their perspective *Variation*, it was important to create both programmed and unprogrammed places with various tempos to suit different people. The big park square is characterised by a high tempo and has three grills and a lot of various possibilities to sit. It is also possible to barbeque in areas with calmer tempo placed closer to the forest. In all the different areas it is both possible to sit many people together and to sit alone.

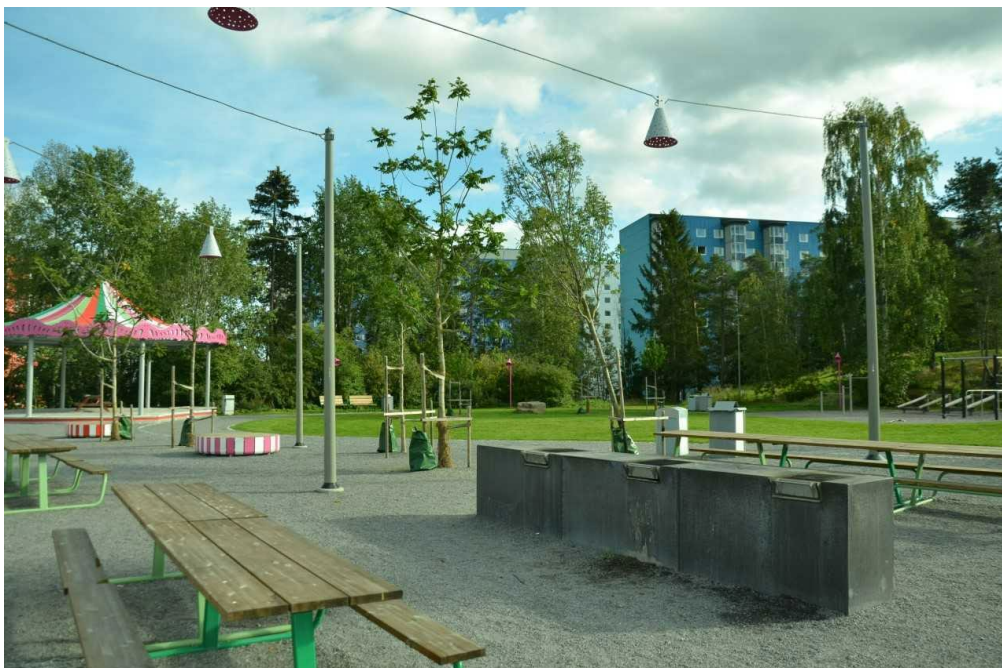


Figure 16. The barbeque at the big park square. Suited to fit large groups of people. Source: *Landskapslaget*.



Figure 17. This barbeque area is located closer to the forest. Source: Landskapslaget.

### *Overlap of activities*

In this project, *Landskapslaget* works a lot with different activities overlapping each other to make it easier to invite people to an activity, and for people to take the step to invite themselves. It is about creating a place that does not feel crowded or non-inclusive, and that it should be easy for people who use the park to create social values and cohesion. The thought with Flemingsbergsparken was to create a park with a lot of activities. Different activities like table tennis table, stage, boules, water play, flexible surface, overlap each other (see Figure 18). This is supposed to contribute to playfulness and unforced meetings. There are many different types of seating options. Both in the form of benches and colourful pouffes, but also on informal edges such as small walls.

One example of overlapping is in the sports field. A classic sports field takes up a lot of space. The sports field in Flemingsbergsparken has a vaulted structure with places to sit inside that reduce the threshold to join the play (see Figure 19).

Other groups of people that should not be forgotten are older people and people without children. During the interview the landscape architects explained that older people often want to sit on a bench placed in the sun where you have an overview of the area. People without children might not want to be in the part where play dominates the area. By overlapping activities and places to sit, the play does not have to dominate the area. Everyone can find a place and feel that they have the right to be in the park.

Quote from one landscape architect who worked with the park;

Previously, there was a classic sports field in the park, but it takes up a lot of space and provides space for one particular activity. We chose to work with the concept *backstage*, *on stage* and *off stage*. The sports field was given an arched structure and has a shape that makes it possible to sit in it as well. You cannot put a label on it, but the idea is that everyone should be able to find a corner where they want to be. It is an important part in the thinking of the entire park. The table tennis tables, the stage, the boules court, the water play - everything adjoins and overlaps each other. (Landscape architect at *Landskapslaget* 2023)



Figure 18. Overlapping activities in the form of a boules court placed close to seating and the playground. Source: *Landskapslaget*.



Figure 19. The sports field with places to sit inside of it. Source: *Landskapslaget*.

#### *Conclusion theme two*

People will have different opinions when it comes to functions of an area. In this project the landscape architects have aimed to create a fair distribution between different functions to please different groups of people. The less one sided you make a place, the simpler it is to use them in a wider way. In this theme the concept of aesthetics differs from the first theme and *Landskapslaget's* aesthetics for the park manages to tie together different functions. So, even if different people have different needs, the design and the park's aesthetics provide the glue that is intended to foster social cohesion.

#### 4.2.3 Aesthetics for strengthening a cohesive city

The third theme emphasises aesthetics in terms of making people feel safe in the area and the theme is divided into three sub-themes.

##### *Improve safety - movement pattern*

The municipality had the aim to develop Flemingsbergsparken to a district-wide destination. It turned out that the people thought the park was dark, unsafe, and not an area that people liked to walk through at all. A lighting artist was involved in the project, and to improve the safety in the area *Landskapslaget* put focus on movement patterns and lighting, and also how people moved in the area and how the area could better be connected to the rest of the city. Just as *Landskapslaget* highlights in their perspective *Community*, it was important to develop walkways



that strengthen neighbourhoods and to create places that bring together people from different districts. The entrances were redefined, and more forest paths were added. Vehicles such as cars and mopeds could no longer drive through the area (see Figure 20 and 21).

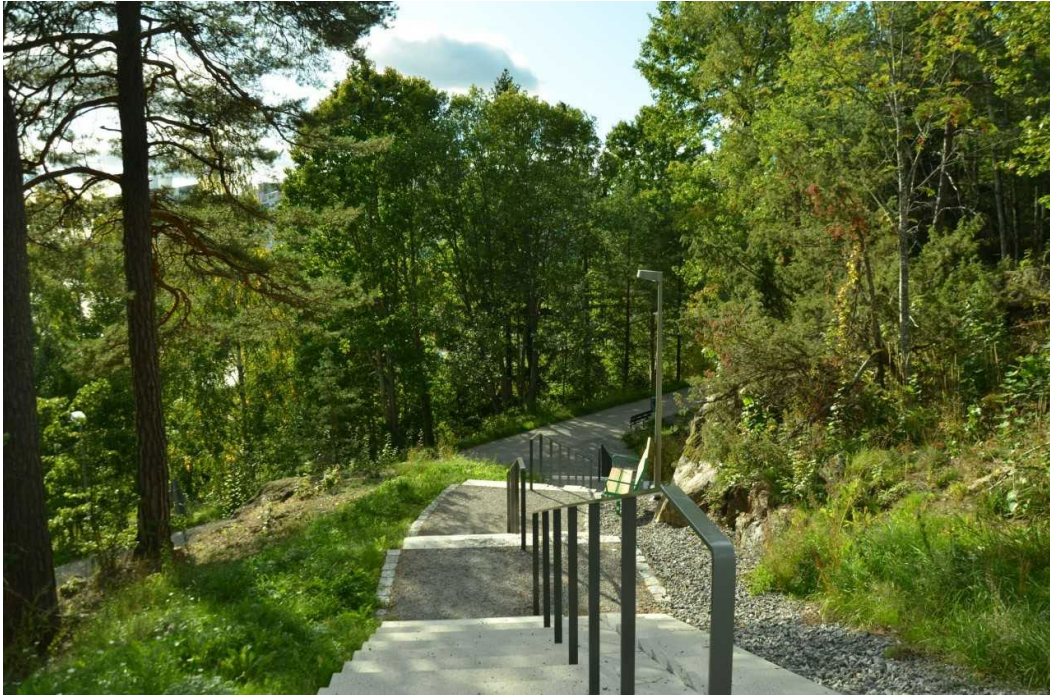


Figure 20. Parts of the forest were opened to improve safety. Source: Landskapslaget.

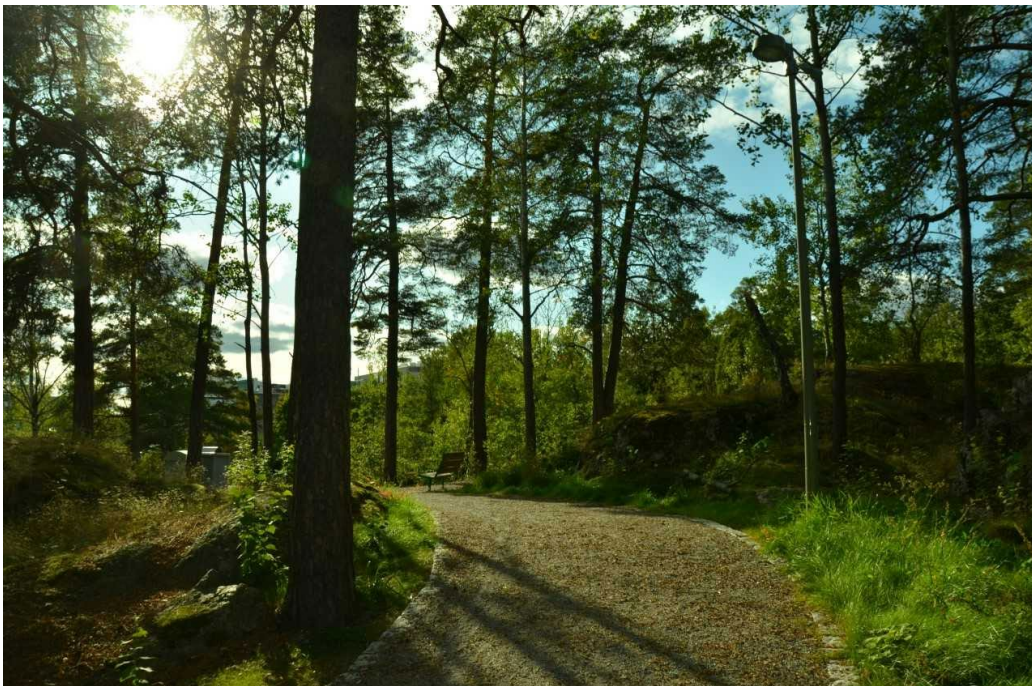


Figure 21. Parts of the forest were opened to improve safety. Source: Landskapslaget.

### *Improve safety – light*

The light was an important part of the creation of the identity and to improve safety. In the citizen dialogue, people talked about being able to use the park during summer and at the same time improve light and safety. One part of the concept amusement park was water showers during summer. The showers were also used as a concept for the lampposts in the park. The light showers mark the entrances and most of the paths (see Figure 22). One request was also to be able to hang out in the park during darker hours and the lighting in the square is inspired by a starry sky (see Figure 23).



*Figure 22. The pink light showers. Source: Landskapslaget.*



Figure 23. The lightning inspired by a sky full of stars. Source: Landskapslaget.

### *Safety today*

It was a concern that the park would be vandalised, but it has not. During the interview the landscape architect explained that people today are spending a lot of time in the park and feedback from the police is that the crime rate has decreased. There are more people hanging out and walking through, there are more lights and there are people in the park more hours per day. All these factors are making the park feel safer.

Quote from one landscape architect who worked with the park;

It is not so common to work with inclusion and citizen dialogue in this way, but the municipality of Huddinge invested in it. The municipality was concerned that the park would be vandalised, but it has not. We believe that it is of great importance that all citizens were involved throughout the entire process. There was such a great turnout in the dialogue and so many people use the park now. The police have reported that there is less crime in the park and that it is more populated around the clock, which makes people feel safe there. I really believe that those who use the park feel that they have been involved in the whole process, and feel that they have been able to contribute to the result (Landscape architect at Landskapslaget 2023)

### *Conclusion theme three*

In this project, the landscape architects have aimed to create a safer area for people to spend time in and walk through. It was a concern that the park would be vandalised, but it has not. The added pathways, redone entrances and the

aesthetics of the light that follows the concept amusement park, are making the area feel safer, both for people living in the area, and in the areas nearby. This together with the new distinguishing aesthetics and design could possibly attract people from nearby neighbourhoods and contribute to a more cohesive city (see Figure 24).



*Figure 24. Parts of the distinguishing design of Flemingsbergsparken. Source: Landskapslaget.*

# Discussion



## 5. Discussion

In the following section, the results and the process of the work are discussed. The research question *In what way does Landskapslaget work with aesthetics in a project in order to promote the social sustainability dimensions?* has been answered through the three themes in the analysis.

### 5.1 Discussion of the result

The landscape architects work with aesthetics in different ways and scales. Co-design is giving insight into what the people living in a specific area think are important, and people will have different opinions when it comes to aesthetics, design, and functions of an area. It is relevant to use the way van Etteger et al. (2016) apply the ACT theory in landscape architecture to see aesthetics from a broader perspective. The non-aesthetic properties from the co-creation have led to aesthetic properties that result in a gathered identity, manages to tie together different functions, and improve safety. Meyer (2008) and Lehtinen (2021) argues that aesthetics can make people be aware and care for their environment. In this project, the co-creation might have led to people caring for the park and can be the reason that the park has not been vandalised.

It is possible to question if the way the landscape architects have worked with aesthetics in Flemingsbergsparken can be applied to any project in Sweden. I claim that the way of working with citizen dialogues as a base for choices of aesthetics are relevant but that it will look different in each specific project. This project builds upon the fact that people want to spend time outside, and that they do not have private gardens for each apartment. In an area with only small houses with private gardens people might not have the need or aim for additional locations to meet and spend time in. This shows the importance of focusing on developing areas in which people do not have private gardens and outdoor places. To create a sustainable society, we must prioritize underserved communities.

It has become clear that the term aesthetics is interpreted in very different ways depending on the person you talk with it about. Even one and the same person can use the word "aesthetics" in different ways, depending on the context. When you

also add the term sustainability and what sustainable aesthetics means the conversations look very different from person to person. Discussions about everything from the importance of the choice of material to people questioning certain trends of building types that they do not find beautiful. Aesthetics is a wide concept and the time for writing this thesis and the length of it is not enough to fully cover the exact meaning of aesthetics. One could question if that is possible at all. I find it interesting that the term is used in the global and national discussions of developing cities when it can be interpreted in so many ways.

With this thesis I aimed to contribute with knowledge in the discussion of sustainable cities. Using aesthetics as a tool in this context has shown to be useful. Aesthetics in a successful project does not have to mean that everyone looking at the project thinks that it is beautiful. Just as Lehtinen (2021) argues, aesthetics is proven to connect to deeper layers like ethics and meaning, and not only to colour and form. The pink colour of the park means something to the people living there. In this context the importance is how much people care for the site.

## 5.2 Limitation

There is a global and national demand for knowledge on how to use aesthetics and design as a tool for developing sustainable cities. By studying the topic, one realises that it is a complex question. The concepts of aesthetics and sustainability are defined differently depending on the context and the person one asks. Landscape architects possess knowledge about ecology, social values and design which means that landscape architects have the competence to work with the concept sustainability for the national and global goals. With this thesis I have tried to find examples of how to use aesthetics to promote sustainability. I wanted to contribute to knowledge about how landscape architects can work with aesthetics to promote sustainability by analysing how one landscape architect office has worked with this. I have narrowed it down to looking at how landscape architects work with aesthetics in their projects to see if one could learn more about how to use it for promoting sustainability.

The choice of focusing on social sustainability was taken because of the time limit and because I argue that it is more written about aesthetics promoting ecological and economic dimensions of sustainability. Three texts that highlight aesthetics promoting sustainability in landscape architecture were chosen as main sources. Two of the texts are focused on how aesthetics can promote ecological sustainability in landscape architecture. One could question if it would have been better to choose texts focusing on aesthetics promoting social sustainability in landscape architecture, but it was not easy to find that type of material. I argue

that what is stated in the texts can be applied to both ecological and social sustainability. In this thesis it is shown that *Landskapslaget* works with aesthetics and sustainability in a manner that suggests that Meyer's (2008) and Lehtinen's (2021) theories are taken to be valid also for the social dimension of sustainability. It would have been possible to include both ecological and economic sustainability when analysing *Flemingsbergsparken*, but I chose to focus on one of the dimensions to be able to do it properly.

It would have been interesting to study several projects to find differences and similarities between chosen aesthetics. The intention was to include three projects, but I realised that it was more interesting to study projects that one could see the outcome and effects of. In my case, the time constraint was the reason why I analysed one project.

### 5.3 Reflections of method

Since I chose to study only one office and finally chose to focus on one project, it was important to dive deep into that project. Advantages with a qualitative research strategy as compared to a quantitative strategy is for instance that you can go deeper into a specific question and obtain richer data, something that might be beneficial when investigating complex human social interactions. Possible disadvantages may however be that it is difficult to investigate a hypothesis with the means of other statistical methods than purely descriptive ones at best, as the number of subjects being interviewed typically may be too few for this. The setting with one personal interview and potentially the selection of subjects to be interviewed also opens for bias of various kinds. I still claim that the choice of doing interviews was rewarding and necessary to really understand the thoughts behind the aesthetic choices.

### 5.4 Further questions to deal with

This thesis is a step on the way to formulating how to work with aesthetics to support dimensions of sustainability, but there are several ways to continue the work. Firstly, it would be interesting to do the study on several projects in landscape architecture. Secondly, it would also be relevant to bring in all three dimensions of sustainability since they affect each other.

One could question why this project was a success. Recurring in the analysis is the role that citizen dialogue has played. People expressed that it felt like no one cared about the park and the people living in the area. By including people in the



dialogue, people felt included in the process and are now looking after the park. Everyone can feel like they have contributed to the outcome and feel proudness and a sense of belonging. I think that this speaks for the importance of site visits and speaking to people that use a place. Because of the number of opinions from the people living in the area the planners and architects did understand the place much deeper. It is not possible to understand a place that deep by only visiting it once. There is a demand for including aesthetics and design in our future city planning but it is not clear how to proceed. One could question if it is possible to create guidelines for how to work with aesthetics, and I do not know the answer. I would argue that it is by studying successful projects that we can try to understand and learn how to do it.

### 5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate how the aesthetic dimensions of a project can promote the social dimensions of sustainability. Choices of aesthetics are shown to be important parts in promoting the social dimensions of sustainability in landscape architecture. Aesthetics are proven to be a complex concept but broadening the definition and meaning of it, one can find new ways of how to work with it for promoting dimensions of social sustainability. Co-creation is an important part of finding the suitable aesthetics for a certain place and necessary to understand how to achieve social sustainability.

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## Figures

Figure 2.1 Lantmäteriet (n.d.). Stockholm. SWEREF 99 TM, RH 2000. Aerial view [Kartografiskt material]. <https://minkarta.lantmateriet.se/> [2023-05-15]

Figure 2.2 Lantmäteriet (n.d.). Flemingsberg. SWEREF 99 TM, RH 2000. Aerial view [Kartografiskt material]. <https://minkarta.lantmateriet.se/> [2023-05-15]

# Appendix 1

Questions for interview:

Part one (more general):

1. How do you work with your sustainability strategy in projects?
2. Are there problems or question marks in how you should use it?
3. How do you emphasise aesthetic aspects as something important? For a place to become sustainable.
4. Do you think there is a greater focus on any part of the sustainability dimensions? (Ecological, aesthetic, economic, social).

Part two (focused on the project):

1. How do/did you work with the sustainability strategy in this project?
2. If we look more closely at the plans, how do you express sustainability in form?
3. How have you worked for social sustainability with design?
4. Have you worked differently in this project than in other projects specifically for inclusion?

## Appendix 2



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet  
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

[Fakultet/Institution/centrumbildning]  
[Ev. kompletterande text,  
t.ex. befattningshavare]

EV. DOKUMENTTYP SLU ID: SLU.[Skriv numret här]  
2023-03-09

### Samtyckeblankett: Personuppgiftsbehandling i studentarbeten

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Vi samlar in följande uppgifter om dig: Hur landskapsarkitekter och arkitekter på ett stadsbyggnad- och landskapsarkitektkontor arbetar med estetik och hållbarhet i projekt med stort fokus på social hållbarhet.

Ändamålet med behandlingen av dina personuppgifter är att SLUs student ska kunna genomföra sitt examensarbete enligt korrekt vetenskaplig metod och bidra till forskning på *Estetisk Hållbarhet*.

Om du vill läsa mer information om hur SLU behandlar personuppgifter och om dina rättigheter kan du hitta den informationen på [www.slu.se/personuppgifter](http://www.slu.se/personuppgifter).

Jag samtycker till att SLU behandlar personuppgifter om mig på det sätt som förklaras i denna text, inklusive känsliga uppgifter om jag lämnar sådana.

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Underskrift

Plats, datum

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Namnförtydligande

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Postadress: Postadress  
Besöksadress: Besöksadress  
Org nr: 202100-2817  
[www.slu.se](http://www.slu.se)

Tel: 018-67 10 00 (vx)  
Mobilnr: XXX-XXX  
[formann.efemamn@slu.se](mailto:formann.efemamn@slu.se)