Social sustainability in an urban planning and development context

Moa Tunström, Division for Urban and Regional Studies, KTH
Social sustainability?

- An umbrella concept
- A residual?
- Antropocentric
- Contested

“The economy and what is rather vaguely described as ‘social matters’ (e.g. lifestyles) are taken to be the main causes for environmental problems, which will obviously have to be improved or changed to ensure ecological sustainability.”

(Littig & Griessler 2005:66)
Social sustainability?

• social mix, social capital, community, safety, life quality, service, identity, cohesion (that physical cohesion and social cohesion are connected), influence, democracy, cooperation, inclusion, health, security, local resources ...
How to measure it?

Measurable?
• Just distribution (income, resources etc)
• Employment
• Equality (gender etc)
• Income level/dependency on welfare/
• Level of education
• Health/public health data
• Crime level
• Accessibility
• Housing types/tenure/housing costs
• Housing standard
• Degree of resettlement
• Participation and local democracy
• Active community organisations
• Participation in local networks/community organisations

How to measure?
• Well-being
• Community
• Neighborliness
• Place identity
• Solidarity
• Tolerance
• Order
• Cohesion
• Justice
• Inclusion
• Safety and security
In the housing area

- How ”self-supporting” is the area?
- What is the social mix in the area?
- Are there good meeting places in the area?
- Accessibility?
- Safety and well-being? Community life, networks and neighborliness?
- Shifting planning and urban ideals, shifting social visions
- New area or renovation/problem solving?
- A socially sustainable place, or a socially sustainable planning process?
http://www.kunskapsmatris-s2020.se/
Linking social and ecological sustainability

- Ecological and social sustainability are interrelated
- Technology is implemented and must work in the long term
- Life style changes
- Critical of the economic growth goal?
- Justice, democracy, participation
A sustainable city - for whom?

“Social sustainability is given, if work within a society and the related institutional arrangements
- Satisfy an extended set of human needs
- Are shaped in a way that nature and its reproductive capabilities are preserved over a long period of time and the normative claims of social justice, human dignity and participation are fulfilled.”

(Littig & Griessler 2005:72)

“Apparently neutral questions such as what to measure, what indicators to use, how to collect reliable data on these indicators, how to make sense of the results, and how to disseminate the results are in fact value based issues that have political and social implications.”

(Perlman & Sheenan 2007: 178)
Planning for socio-environmental sustainability...

... is about pedagogy
... is a political project
... is about well-being and satisfaction
... is a collaborative project
... is about indicators
To discuss

• Can we build for social sustainability?
• What is bad social sustainability? Signs of it?
• More interpretations of socio-environmental awareness?
• Should the social stand back for the environmental? Or the environmental pay the cost of social equality?
• Should we distinguish more/less political socio-environmental sustainability?
• Social sustainability in a non-urban planning context?
• Social sustainability in your own discipline? In your teaching?