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Kärrholm, Mattias; Torisson, Fredrik

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00



Crowd control and spatial distribution: the case of Swedish student housing

Mattias Kärrholm¹ · Fredrik Torisson¹

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Abstract

In this article, we use a crowd theoretical perspective to look at student crowds and how they have been managed through various subdivisions of student housing. How has the student cohort been territorialised and divided into entities according to differences in group sizes, gender, family constellations, etc., and how has housing played a role in these social differentiations? Using the history of student housing in Sweden as a case, we show both how crowd management and housing was intimately related already from the start and suggest a way to analyse this relation. Unruly student crowds have been regarded as a problem since the birth of the university, but the framing of the problem has changed over the centuries. In Sweden, after centuries of problems with episodic riots in the student cohort, more regulated forms of student housing started to evolve at the end of the nineteenth century. Here, we investigate the management of student crowds from the early days until the consolidation of large student cities around 1970. Student housing has played an important role for the categorisation and formation of the student cohort and has also proved to be a rich, if specialised, field of experimentation for architects and planners interested in social engineering through housing. Our hope is that that crowd theoretical perspective laid out in this paper can inform and inspire future studies on housing in general and student housing in particular.

Keywords Student housing · Student homes · Student cities · Crowd theory · Social engineering

✉ Mattias Kärrholm
mattias.karrholm@arkitektur.lth.se

Fredrik Torisson
fredrik.torisson@abm.lth.se

¹ Department of Architecture and Built Environment, Lund University, Box 118, 221 00 Lund, Sweden

1 Introduction

Research on the distribution, control and housing of students is growing yet quite fragmented field of investigation. Student *distribution* is vividly discussed, not least on the urban scale through the discourse of studentification (Gosh & Gupta, 2025; Sage et al., 2013; Smith, 2002) and through associated discussions on student geographies and 'student-scapes' (Zasina et al., 2023). These studies often point to the effects of student gentrifications (Nakazawa 2017), but there are also studies looking at financialization and the international distribution of students, e.g. through new phenomena such as transnational education zones or the so-called 'education cites' (Kleibert, 2023; Kleibert et al., 2021). Student riots and the *control* (or lack of control) of students is also a constant subject of debate (Chenoweth et al., 2024; De Groot & Gerard, 2014). It has, for example, recently been argued that student protests are more likely to escalate and become violent than other kinds of protest, and they are subsequently also often treated as a threat by different authorities (Feinberg & Salehyan, 2025). Student *housing*, finally, has often been discussed as another, separate field focusing on aspects such as, for example, housing preferences and satisfaction amongst students (Gong & Söderberg, 2024; Verhetsel et al., 2017), well-being (Simpheh & Akinlolu, 2021), and sustainability (Attia et al., 2020). In this article, we argue that the question of student housing could benefit from being seen together with questions of distribution and control. In fact, the distribution and control of students have been part and parcel of student housing from the very beginning.

Student housing and the way in which it distributes and controls the student population is never neutral, but always reflects and mediates different kind of power relations (Dovey, 1999). Using a crowd theoretical perspective (Borch, 2012; Brighenti, 2023), we here aim to investigate how the student cohort has been divided and housed. In order to do so, we use a historical case to show both how crowd management and housing were intimately related already from the start and to suggest a way to analyse this relation. Our hope is that this perspective might prove fruitful in research on contemporary housing in general, and contemporary student housing in particular. In short, we argue that housing plays a concrete and important role in the many ways in which students are categorised and arranged into different social constellations. We set out to explore a number of questions: How have students and student groups historically been territorialised and divided into different entities through housing, e.g. in relation to group sizes, rank, gender, family constellations, organisational forms, disciplines, etc.? In what ways has housing played a role in these social differentiations?

In the article, we follow the evolution of student housing in Sweden from its very beginning and up until the consolidation of large student cities around 1970. The study thus seeks to investigate the territorialisation of students through housing with a specific focus on the *synomorphic* evolution of built and social form and the desired behaviour of students. Sweden is here an interesting and illuminating case. First, because it has experimented with several different forms of student housing over the years, and second, because it through State-led politics and loan systems (documented in a series of public enquires) went from practically no student housing to a surplus within the span of just one hundred years (1870–1970). The study of the empirical material is primarily based on literature and archive studies. There is yet no comprehensive history of Swedish student housing, but there are several smaller studies focussing on student housing of specific universities (e.g. Hellström,

1996; Lindahl, 1957; Lundin, 2021; Tersmeden & Blom, 2010c). Important sources are also the Swedish Government Official Reports dealing with housing in general and student housing in particular during the time of the study (SOU, 1933, 1937, 1948, 1961, 1970). The archives consulted include the digitalized Swedish newspaper archives (accessed from Lund university Library), Uppsala City Archive, Uppland's Museum, Lund City Archive and Malmö City Archive.

2 Packs, crowds and social cuts

The emergence of Swedish student housing at the end of the 1800s was no coincidence. The nineteenth century has often been described as particularly concerned with the management of crowds. There was a growing fear of their revolutionary potential, witnessed not least during the French Revolution and again in various cities across Europe in 1848 (Borch, 2012; Brighenti, 2023). The underlying idea was that the crowd constituted a threat to the individual, the family and the state (Brighenti, 2010: 292 f.), and European experiments with crowd control were legion. We see them, for example, in the emergent scientific field of statistics, the birth of 'urbanism' in Barcelona, in the advances in policing and new kinds of police institutions in capitals across Europe, and in Haussmann's militarization of the urban space, intended to make public and private life visible and easier to surveil (Choay, 1997; Foucault, 2010; Vidler, 1978; Wallenstein, 2009). During this time, crowds were controlled and dispersed via different kinds of social and spatial means (Markus, 1993), and through a proliferation of territorial divisions (Sack, 1986). This article looks at one particular example: student crowds and how they have been managed through various subdivisions in student housing. The unruliness of student crowds was regarded as a problem ever since the *Universitas*, but the framing of this problem has changed over the centuries.

In Sweden, after centuries of problems with episodic riots and violence within the student cohort, more regulated forms of student housing started to evolve from the 1870s onward. Considering the crowd management ambition of this time, it is probably no coincidence that modern student housing emerged in Sweden during the nineteenth century. The crowds were here dealt with through the formation of different social entities. Before delving into student housing, i.e. built form, we should therefore elaborate on what is meant here with social form. The social is here not seen as given, but as produced through relations and associations (Barad, 2007; Latour, 2005). The entity and form that the social takes cannot be taken for granted but must be studied, and each individuation of a social entity must be seen as a problem of formation related to an environment in which this entity takes form (Simondon, 2020). The individual, so often presented as a given in Western thought, can thus not be seen as a basic building block of the social. Social form is a problem of morphogenesis, and since nothing acts alone (Latour, 2005, p. 44), it is also a relational problem, i.e. the individual is just one specific form of sociality amongst others, albeit with its own sets of associations and connections. The individual has its own peculiar way of being produced and can, in short, be seen as one type or guise of a multiplicity that includes crowds, pacts, groups, sects, spectres, families, troops, households, etc. (Brighenti, 2010: 297 f.). Here, we argue that architecture has a specific role to play in this process. As a material prerequisite or form-asserting matter, architecture is also an important factor in the stabilisation of social categories in society. A classic example is the bungalow or the post-war villa (King,

2004), instrumental for the organisation and separation of nuclear families in an era of car-dependency and suburbs.

Following this, how do we conceptualise and architectonically visualise social form? In what ways and shapes is the social material of the student cohort divided? Inspired by Karen Barad, we use the notion of a social *cut*. Barad has described the way in which agencies and entities are produced through cuts, where a cut is described as ‘*an agentially enacted ontological separability within a phenomenon*’ (Barad, 2007: 175, italics in original). Objects do not exist in themselves as separate entities, but they are produced through relations within phenomena. What constitutes the social, or the relevant social entity, is cut in different ways in different situations depending on the relations that constitute a certain phenomenon. Social cuts are thus part and parcel of societal phenomena, i.e. built structures and social groups are always coproduced to some extent. This coevolution is what we aim to study here, tracing it through the various iterations of Swedish student housing, where the crowd of students is divided differently at different times and for different reasons.

One way to deal with different social forms is through crowd theory. Crowd theory, although a child of the nineteenth century, has come to the fore again, e.g. due to the recent rise of protest movements, as well as new phenomena, such as digital mobs. In his seminal work, *The Politics of Crowds*, Borch has suggested a crowd theory, that not only focusses on human-to-human relations (as the relation between leader and crowd), but that more actively also includes non-humans, such as built form (Borch, 2012: 301 f.). Brighenti, for his part, has excavated the many conceptualisations of different social formations that can be found in sociological research, including crowds, populations and masses (Brighenti, 2014), and in a more recent work, he updates Elias Canetti’s crowd theory as way of enabling an interrogation of the ongoing formations and territorialisations of social life (Brighenti, 2023). Inspired by Borch and Brighenti, we will in the following discuss different types of social forms that relate to the management and territorialisation of the student population through housing. As seen in the next chapter, the problem of dealing with student crowds is as old as the university itself. The first social formation that is discussed in relation to this problem is the *pack*, presented here as the unruly pack. A pack consists, as Brighenti (2023) has described, of a limited, closely connected, smaller group with a common purpose that acts in unison, not unlike a pack of wolves, for instance. The pack is an intensive rather than an extensive entity, and can act as ‘an avantgarde for crowd formation’ (Brighenti, 2023: 57) or as the ‘yeast of crowds’ (Brighenti, 2010: 303). Elias Canetti used the concept of pack for a unit of ten to twenty persons that form an operational unit (Brighenti, 2023: 56 ff.). Packs are formed to carry out a specific task or mission, for example, to gather a crowd. Such a crowd can be gathered through various means. In student life, the means include, e.g. rhythms supplied by songs and chants, and the paraphernalia and culture brought by the student nations. The same tactics are also employed by, for instance, football supporters, where packs of the so-called ‘ultras’ organise in much the same way to mobilise a crowd from the regular fans before and during the game.

The pack is an actor in and of itself, but it also constitutes an agent in relation to a larger group, the *crowd*. A crowd does not necessarily have a purpose, but when it gets a purpose, it may turn dangerous for both individuals, in the form of a mob, and for authorities, in the form of a riot or a revolt. A third collective actor, or social cut, to which we will return below, is the *troop*. Here, the troop is seen as a disciplined and managed group of people, not necessarily as personally invested or self-organised as the pack, and troops may perhaps be

seen as more related to *the mass* than to the crowd. Social theory refocussed from crowds to masses from the 1930s, and despite attempts to revitalise crowd theory from the late 1950s, in the 1960s research focus shifted towards social movements (Borch, 2012: 234). As we shall see, the increased Swedish focus on state-led organisation after WWII also entails that smaller social groups are sometimes better conceptualised as troops rather than as packs. However, we should here be reminded that the formation of troops or the control of the masses does not in any way mean that crowd and packs are done with once and for all. They could be dormant, but might always reform and come to life again.

3 Student housing and groups before 1800 (unruly packs)

By international standards, intentionally planned and built housing for students appeared quite late in Sweden. The idea of constructing specific buildings for student housing was only clearly articulated and institutionalised during the late nineteenth century. There are, however, some earlier examples of interest. The first recorded Swedish student accommodations can be found in Paris, where three Swedish colleges opened in the late thirteenth century. These were quite small, organised by the dioceses and took an interest in the education of priests at the Universitas at a time when there were no Swedish universities (Annerstedt, 1877: 6–14; Gabriel, 1960). As new universities opened closer to Sweden – first in Prague in 1348, then in Erfurt, Leipzig, Rostock, Greifswald and finally in Sweden with Uppsala University (inaugurated 1477), the Swedish Paris colleges were made redundant and eventually closed. There were no colleges at the German and the Swedish universities. In Germany, a small number of students received free room and board through the *Bursa*. These student hostels could host between a handful to several hundred students, and a single room of a larger student hostel could accommodate around twelve students (Rückbrod, 1977; Schwinges, 1992: 214 ff.). In contrast to English and Scottish colleges, which also were smaller and often provided single bedrooms, the Burse were not concerned with guidance or fostering social responsibility (Adelman, 1969: 27); on the contrary, they were often associated with riots and disorder. Partly as a result of this, they became unpopular with city authorities and declined in number until they had all but disappeared around 1600. Instead, students in Germany, like in Italy, Sweden, and most Eastern European countries, mainly found their lodging with citizens, in hostels, inns, or at the home of professors (Müller, 1996: 346). At Uppsala University, the first main building, *Gustavianum*, was built around 1623 and initially had rooms for 52 students, but these were transformed into faculty offices in 1662 (Annerstedt, 1877: 264; Lundin, 2021: 14).

Initially, students at Swedish universities were organised in student nations according to the students' geographical background. The student nation was an important part of the medieval European university. Adelman describes how 'students banded together in Nations to create an artificial citizenry' (1969, p. 16). Whilst the nations were important when students came to Paris from all over Europe, their importance diminished in most countries as the distances between universities decreased. Another reason for the decline was that nations were seen to cause civil unrest; in Oxford, for example, student nations were abolished in 1274 (Adelman, 1969).

In Sweden, universities were few and far between, at least up until the late twentieth century. The student nations were initially organised from below. In the mid-1600 s, there were

serious discussions about forbidding gatherings and assemblies connected to the student nations (Annerstedt, 1877: 381; Florén, 1999; Klinge et al., 1988: 291 ff.); ultimately, they were organised and regulated instead. By the end of the seventeenth century, for example, new directives demanded that each nation appoint a university professor to serve as *Inspector*, who had authority to maintain order and enforce responsibility. In 1733, this was further formalised by a royal resolution stating that students must be registered with one of the nations, except for students of noble rank, who were instead permitted to have their own personal inspector (Klinge et al., 1988: 302). Associations were also developed around meals; these were often linked to the student nations, but not always. In Lund, an association was founded in the late seventeenth century at which students with scholarships could eat at no cost. A parallel tradition had students dining at the home of professors. This was common in Lund but rather rare in Uppsala, where nations were stronger (Annerstedt, 1914: 610; Weibull, 1868: 288).

Despite efforts by inspectors and the University Guard, who had the task of keeping students in line (Geschwind, 1999: 41), battles and riots amongst students were common. There were, for example, fights between students from different nations, between students and the University Guard, and between students and townspeople. It was not uncommon for students to be armed; some had previously served as soldiers in one of the many military campaigns of the time (Klinge et al., 1988: 318 f.), and conflicts frequently erupted over minor controversies. There are several examples of how a casual accusation of drunkenness ended in manslaughter (Annerstedt, 1914: 594). Battles between student nations were not uncommon. For example, one famous fight (with swords) between *Ångermanland* and *Östgöta* nations took place in Uppsala in 1724 (Annerstedt, 1914: 594 f.). Another took place in Lund, between the nations of Gothenburg and Scania in 1746 (Weibull, 1868: 285). Fights between two student nations could even break out in the middle of sermons, as in Uppsala Cathedral in 1747 (Annerstedt, 1914: 599). There were also fights involving professors, such as Professor Upmarck, who allegedly shot a student during a public riot in 1706 (Annerstedt, 1877: 415). Walpurgis Night (*Valborgsmässoafton*) was perhaps the most infamous feast in this regard. On Walpurgis Night of 1765, the Uppsala Post Office found itself under siege by students firing guns and throwing stones. Another tradition was for students to wear masks and create mayhem during the feasts and weddings of townspeople (Annerstedt, 1914: 601 ff.).

Social rank was an important matter in these times, and the issue of rank was also brought into the university (Schwinges, 1992: 206 ff.). At Uppsala University, which drew the largest number of noblemen in Sweden this became a problem (Klinge et al., 1988: 326). Noble students did not stay out of trouble, but were often instigators and leaders of riots and unrest. Noble families were, however, important benefactors of the university, and students of noble rank could not be jailed easily or forced to pay bail (Annerstedt, 1909: 396 f.).

Professors often let rooms to students. For example, in the late seventeenth century, the two professors Andreas Spole and Petrus Holm in Lund hosted 21 students each (Tersmeden, 2010a: 9). Accommodation was an important question for the Swedish universities, although they did not provide it themselves. In Åbo (Turku), where a single room – like in Lund and Uppsala – could be rented out to up to four students, the chancellor called upon the mayor in 1640 to punish all citizens who had room to house students but refused to

accommodate any (Klinge et al., 1988: 344 f., see also Annerstedt, 1914: 611).¹ In Lund, there was a project in 1713 to organise student housing, first for 40, and then 48 students, but it was never carried out (SOU, 1937). Instead, starting in the eighteenth century, a large number of the students were housed in privately owned *studentkaserner* (student barracks). A *studentkasern* was a private house or attic organised to provide as many single rooms for students as possible, usually for four and up to around a dozen students. Most of these were closed by the mid-twentieth century, but a few remained (Ingers, 1951; Tersmeden, 2010a).

To sum up, we can see that crowd management was quite weak in the early days. The student cohort was formed through different social cuts, most importantly through the student nations (based on regions and geographical origin). As mentioned, the nations were organised and made mandatory in an attempt to solve the issue of unruly students, but instead they became a part of the problem. Annerstedt, who describes student riots and upheavals in Uppsala's history up to 1792 at length in his book of 1877, often refers to students as a *flock* (a Swedish word for pack). The student nations became, as we have seen, an important preplanned crowd for different packs to draw from. Other social cuts included, e.g. meal communities, students of noble rank and theology students. It should perhaps also be noted here that all students of this time were male. Female students were not allowed until the 1870s, which we will come back to.

Regardless of the different ways of categorising different kinds of student groups, the population remained an unruly and fluid cohort of crowds and packs. Much like with today's football supporters, there were extensive efforts to tame these packs and render them incapable of mobilising uncontrollable crowds. Adelman claims that students and teachers at English universities like Oxford and Cambridge formed communities through their colleges, whereas students at the German universities were a 'collection of individuals and clans' (Adelman, 1969: 51). The Swedish situation was like the German one in this respect, but with a series of quite stable 'clans' or packs, formalised through the obligatory student nations. As we shall see, student housing came to play an important role in the efforts of taming and later dispersing of these packs.

4 The supervised home (taming the packs)

A series of regulations introduced in the nineteenth century entailed a new societal role for Swedish universities. Regular government funding for the universities was introduced in 1830. Before this, the universities were self-sufficient, subsisting on accumulated donations. Until 1830, Uppsala University had also had a direct part in the governing of the city itself. In 1852, the jurisdiction of the university over teachers and professors disappeared (its jurisdiction over students remained until 1908, see Frängsmyr, 2010: 11 f.). Universities thus gradually became more of a public concern in the nineteenth century, and as the university increasingly focussed more on scientific development, often in relation to contemporary societal demands, former tensions between students and townspeople seem to have decreased. Frängsmyr notes that the last big fight between students and townspeople in Uppsala seems to have taken place around 1840 (Frängsmyr, 2010: 29). However, the gulf between the students and townspeople did not disappear during the nineteenth century

¹ This interference between landlords of the city and students has an old history; the Bull of Clement II in 1189 already regulated this relation with regards to students in Bologna (Adelman 1969:16).

(Gevers & Vos, 2004: 269). Instead, it took another direction where it became clear that these different groups also could benefit from each other. Gevers and Vos call the time from the nineteenth century until 1968 the ‘classical’ student movement era. The student movements of this era were often initiated and led by students and frequently adopted and influenced broader movements in society (Gevers & Vos, 2004: 269 f.). In France, workers and students demonstrated together in 1830 and 1845, and also joined forces in the riots of 1848 – a year in which a series of student revolts occurred across Europe. Also in the USA, a series of student rebellions and riots took place during the first part of the nineteenth century (Adelman, 1969: 31). In Sweden, there was a period of *Scandinavianism* – a student-led popular movement that sought to rekindle a kinship between the different Scandinavian countries – from the 1840s to around the 1870s, a period with some moments of unrest. From the 1860s and 1870s, we see a new student radicalism crystallising in societies such as the Verdandi (1882) and D.U.G. in Lund (1883; later D.Y.G.). These movements advocated freedom in search of knowledge (against idealistic philosophies and a seemingly dogmatic theology). When the Social Democratic Party formed in 1889, student movements soon linked to it, raising issues such as improved education for the worker population, the so-called *folkbildning* (Frängsmyr, 2010: 24; Gevers & Vos, 2004: 315 and 326). The formalisation and institutionalisation of student movements in the following decades can be illustrated by the fact that the Swedish student union was given its own seat on the Government Commission on Higher Education in 1945 (Gevers & Vos, 2004: 286).

The universities also saw something of a revolution during the nineteenth century in terms of construction. A series of new building types relating to different academic departments and new sciences were introduced (Lindahl, 1957). The number of students was also rising. In the mid-1800s, Uppsala had around 800 students, a comparable number to that of earlier centuries. By the end of the 1880s, however, this had increased to 1,800 students (Frängsmyr, 2010: 22). The student nations began constructing houses for themselves – many nation buildings were also constructed during this century, especially in Uppsala. These consisted mainly of offices and different kinds of communal spaces, including meal communities or student restaurants (Ehn, 1977). In Lund, *Akademiska Föreningen* (the student union) was formed in 1830, and plans for its new building started immediately. The first plans focussed on spaces for festivities, but included 50 student rooms, 25 on each floor, as well as lodgings for four university teachers who were meant to oversee the students. It was also stated that the servants should be foreign nationals to give the students opportunity to learn a foreign language. The plans were met with criticism by the students, not least because of these disciplinary and pedagogical ambitions. Eventually, a building was erected, opening in 1851, but without these ‘services’. The focus was on a large dining hall for the students, a library and parlours, but there were also 20 student rooms, and four double rooms (*dubletter*), meant for two students each (Tersmeden, 2010b: 57 ff.).

Akademiska Föreningen, however, constituted an exception; most students still rented rooms around town. Instead, a new kind of institution emerged during the 1880s: the student home (*studenthem*). Four student homes opened in Uppsala towards the end of the nineteenth century. Norrby's student home opened in 1887 and initially housed twelve students but soon took in 22. The student home was an institution with managerial staff on-site. This included a *husfru* – a matron or a housekeeper – who had her dwelling on the premises, and a *husfar*, a patron, who took care of administration but lived elsewhere. Several student homes were constructed: *Fjellstedtska*, erected two buildings in 1887 and

1888, and together hosted 33 students. These, just like Norrby, prioritised theology students, whereas Uppsala's fourth student home, *Nyktterhetsvännerna* (from 1889, initially housing 12 but soon 30 students) was constructed by the temperance movement and had sobriety as an absolute requirement. The fifth student home, Waldenströmska, was built in 1920 and hosted students who belonged to the free churches, i.e. not communicants of the Swedish State Church (SOU, 1937: 44 and 27 ff.).

The student homes of Lund share many traits with those in Uppsala. The two first student homes were *Lunds Universitetshem*, opening in 1892 for 20 students (with scholarships for poor and well-behaved students), and *Enskilda studenhemmet* (also called *Collianders*), which also opened in 1892 but prioritised theology students. *Thomanders studenthem* for well-behaved students opened in 1895 with 12 rooms (see Fig. 1). *Frikyrkliga studenthemmet* (also called *Micklagård*), hosted students belonging to the free churches and opened in 1919 with an unknown number of rooms (in 1943, there were eleven). A student home subsidised by the temperance movement was discussed around 1900, but the plans were never realised (SOU, 1937: 55 ff.; Tersmeden & Blom, 2010).

The first Swedish era of strategic student housing, which we may perhaps set to 1880–1920, was thus clearly dominated by student homes. These homes, serving a pack of students (called *hemiter*), were ideal for moral education with social spaces, adult supervision, and dinner rituals. Most homes also had expanded packs as an extended group of students took their meals at the home (called *hemäter*, literally home eaters), spreading the student home culture to a larger network of students. The earliest forms of regulated student housing thus aimed at taming and disciplining the packs and providing a moral education of the individual that was congruous with the patriarchal ideas of the time, predominantly theologians and priest students, Christians of different kinds, the sober, and the poor but hard-working. Perhaps this may also be seen as a pioneering attempt to establish large families of a sort and house the students for their moral and economic benefit. Although, the student cohort was seen as a potential threat to the city, the safety of the students was strangely enough never discussed, instead the focus was on the domestication, disciplination and moral education of the students (which were treated as a threat not only to others but also to themselves).

From the perspective of crowd management, we can see how the student homes helped taming potential packs through the forming of smaller supervised groups. The deindividualizing power of crowds and packs (cf. Borch, 2012: 241) was counteracted through mimicking a kind of isolated extended family with more formalised roles. A more general societal ambition of isolating families from each other (and from the neighbouring community) started during the second half of the nineteenth century (Karlsson, 1993: 45), and was further strengthened as a counter-reaction to the rise of socialism in Europe in the 1890s. There was a fear of uprisings, riots and social disintegration, not least of working-class communities, which led to the formulation of the architectural problem of organising the social units. In France, this included the separation of individuals and activities within the dwelling, separating and isolating families from each other and separating different groups of the population from each other (Donzelot, 1979; Gromark, 1987: 94 f.). The student home may be seen as part of this development, although it served a very specific form of extended family. The student homes catered for a very small part of the student population and there was, to our knowledge, never any joint or organised complaints about the disciplining order. Over time, as new student housing formats were introduced, the student homes were also modernised. For example, the dwelling of the housekeeper was rebuilt into student rooms

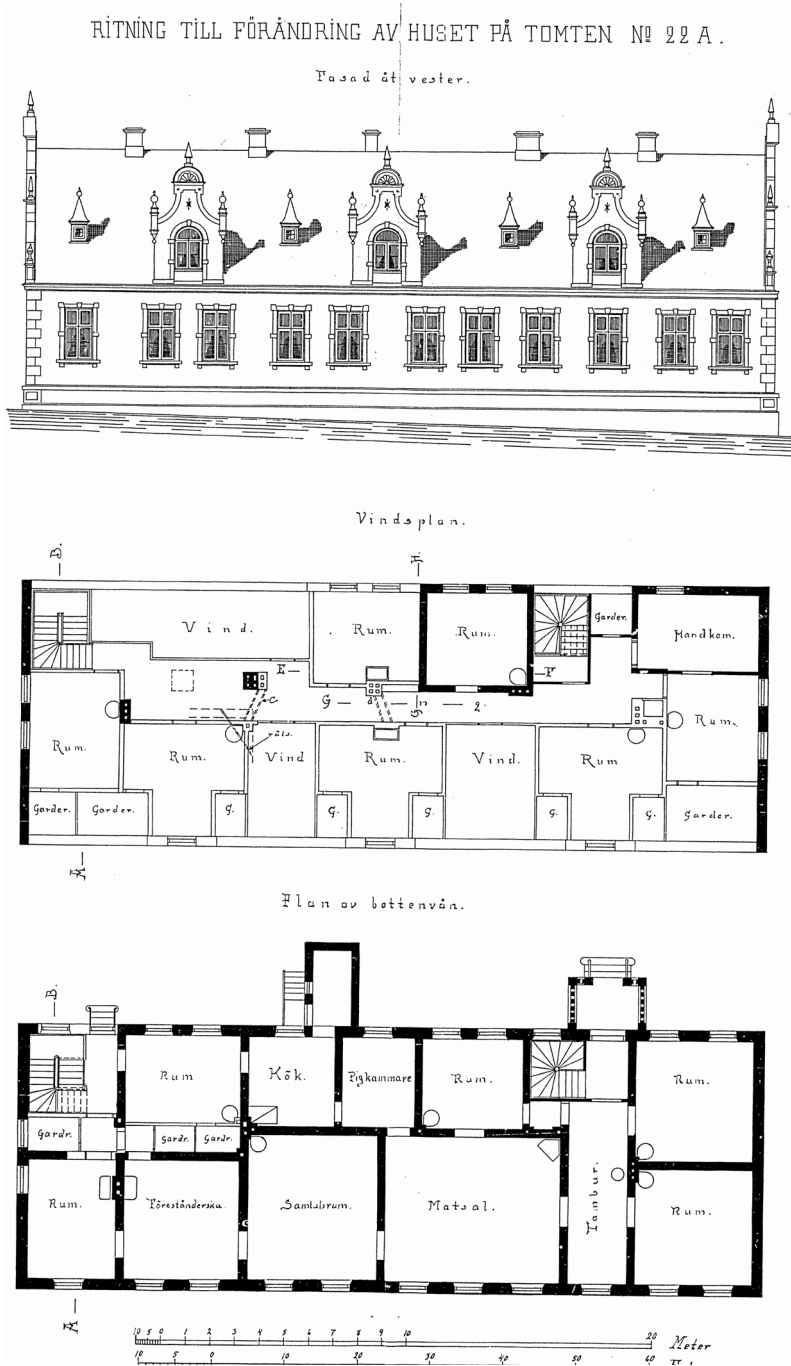


Fig. 1 Plan of Thomanders Student Home in Lund, 1895. With common rooms (*samlingsrum*, *matsal*), the housekeeper's room (*förestånderska*), and the maid's room (*pigkammare*) on the ground floor. Image from the original planning application (Lund City Archive)

(but often due to a lack of funds rather than any complaints). At Thomanders, this was, for example, done in the 1930s (Arbetet, 1941). The concept of family was then changing, with the idea of the extended family gradually giving way to that of the nuclear family.

5 The student corridor (dissolving the packs)

Following this first set of attempts to tame the packs by arranging them in home-like supervised environments, a second round of attempts followed in the 1920s and 1930s. The aim now was to dissolve the packs rather than tame them. In the mid-1930s, the student housing situation was a growing problem. Student numbers were steadily rising, but despite new student housing the number of rooms to rent was dwindling; newly constructed regular flats were spatially optimised and contained few surplus rooms, whilst the demolition of existing buildings of flats further reduced the total number of extra rooms let to students. The student union in Uppsala arranged an architectural competition in 1923 that ultimately led to a student housing project that opened in 1930 (see Figs. 2 and 3). This building was introduced as a modern form of student housing. It had 58 single, soundproofed rooms for male students arranged along corridors on each floor. The building lacked common rooms, kitchens and dining rooms; the only amenity that inhabitants shared was the toilet (Bergold, 1985: 336). Every eight rooms shared a toilet. The house became known as *Gubbyllan*, which translates loosely to ‘the shelf of men’. Presumably, the name was a reference to the rooms, which were arranged like books in a bookshelf – an impression, no doubt, reinforced by the horizontal string course that connects the windowsills on the façade.

Student corridors arrived later in Lund. The big boom came after 1945 with a series of projects drawn by Hans Westman (Tägil, 1996). The first of Westman’s projects, *Aspegrenska huset*, opened in 1947 and had 17 student rooms of about 12 square metres each, arranged along corridors on three floors (see Fig. 4). The students shared toilets and showers but had individual washbasins. Meals were expected to be eaten outside the house, e.g. at the restaurant provided by *Akademiska Föreningen* down the street (Tägil, 1996: 164 ff.).

A unifying characteristic of the new student corridors as compared to the student homes was the absence of communal spaces and an on-site authority. Instead, the focus was on providing each individual student with a quiet and undisturbed place for study. Studying therefore became more individualised and professionalised (Adelman, 1969: 63). One aspect of

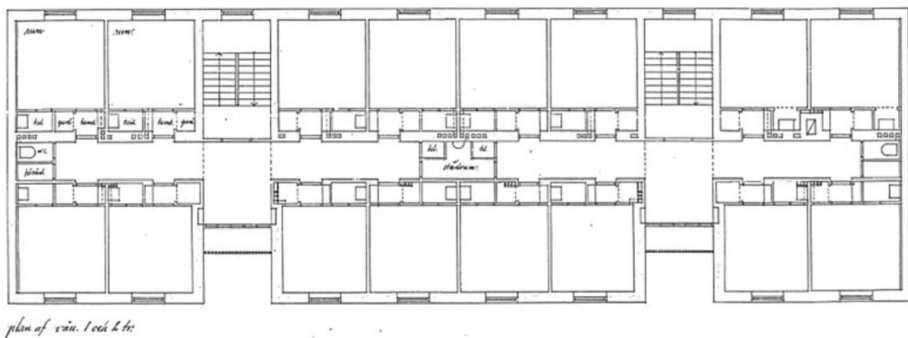


Fig. 2 The student house *Gubbyllan* in Övre Slottsgatan, Uppsala. Plan from the original planning application in 1929 showing the first and second floor (Uppsala City Archive)



Fig. 3 *Gubbhyllan* on Övre Slottsgatan, early 1930s. Photo from the collection of Uppland's Museum by Paul Sandberg (public domain)

this was the soundproofing between the rooms and the corridor (see Figs. 2 and 4). In SOU, 1961, the authors comment on *Gubbhyllan* that:

The main aim was thus no longer to provide a common environment for a group of students, but to provide each student with his own dwelling, as isolated as possible from its neighbour. (1961: 10, our translation)²

If the spatial isolation of families emerged as an important issue during the nineteenth century, these tendencies continued during the twentieth century, and Swedish architects did not hesitate to partake in reforming the social cuts afforded through housing. The family and what it consists of become a subject of some scrutiny during the interwar years (Karlsson, 1993: 71 f.). For example, the renowned architect Sven Markelius (SOU, 1933) claimed that new housing solutions 'could contribute to the dissolving of certain unwanted household and family types' (Markelius, 1933: 25, our transl.).³ The unwanted family types here included adults outside the nuclear family that remained in the dwelling in order to help with household work. In Markelius' project for collective housing, household work could instead be centralised (at least some of it), and the nuclear family preserved (Markelius, 1932).

In the 1930s, students began to receive state-sponsored student loans and grants. There was also a growing idea in society of the right to have a home of one's own (Hellström,

² In the original Swedish: 'Huvudsyftet var således icke längre att bereda en grupp studenter en gemensam miljö utan att bereda varje student tillgång till egen bostad, så isolerad som möjligt från grannes.'

³ In the original Swedish: 'bidraga till en önskvärd upplösning av vissa hushålls- och familjetyper'.

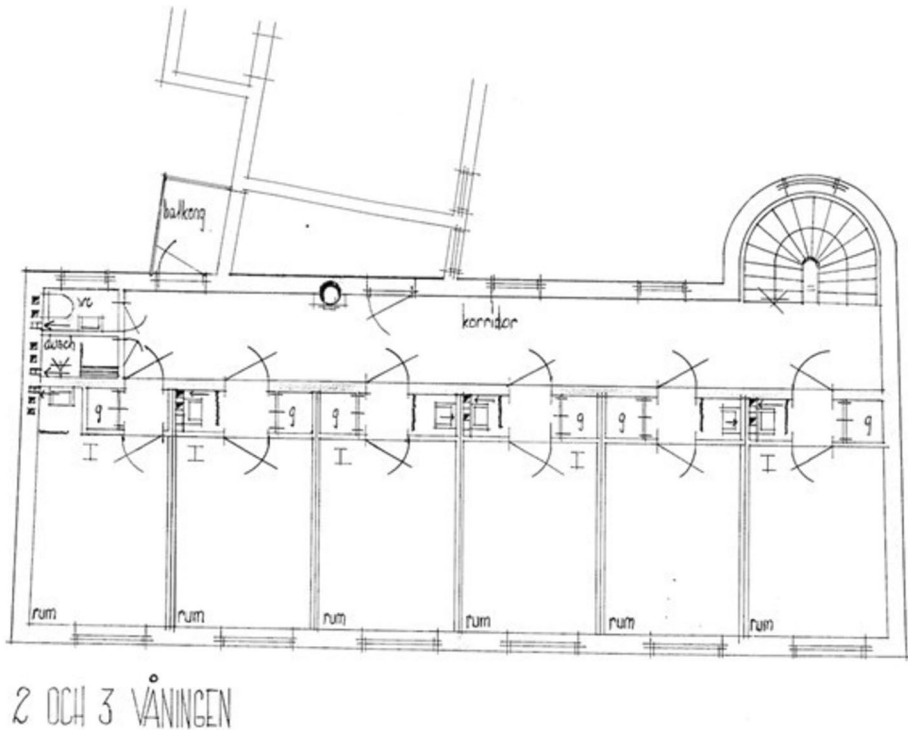


Fig. 4 Aspengrenska in Lund, 1947. Note the double doors between the corridor and the room itself, part of the soundproofing of the space within. Plan of the first and second floors. Image from the original planning application (Lund City Archive)

1996, p. 100). The homogenisation and standardisation of the family unit, reduced to the nuclear family of parents and children, also meant that the student household became a kind of pre-family unit with a determined path for the future. The ambition was now to set up as many students as possible for a future as family providers. The new interest in financial support was coupled with the ambition to enrol new student groups into the universities. There were thus discussions about the so-called 'begåvningsreserven' (the talent reserve), i.e. young talents suited for higher education who did not enrol at universities for different reasons. These students were expected to be found in the working class and in non-academic families (SOU, 1948: 50 ff.). In the first thorough public inquiry into student housing in Sweden, the Official Reports of the Swedish Government SOU (1948: 43–44), it is noted that even though 47% of the Swedish population were industrial workers, only 10–11% of the university students were children of industrial workers. Similarly, whilst 35% of the population were farmers, only 10% of Uppsala's students and 16% of Lund's students were children of farmers. Children of priests, on the other hand, were overrepresented by 27 times in Uppsala, and by 24 times in Lund (SOU, 1937: 102).

The student home of the late nineteenth century had very different ambitions. The very first paragraph of the Norrby student home statutes states the aim to provide dwellings and a home 'for students of theology who show promise of becoming worthy priests' (Norrby-

hus, 2024).⁴ If the idea of the student home was to raise a good citizen on the basis of high morale, (often) based on a Christian ethic, the notion of the good individual was now measured in relation to how well one served society and the Swedish nation. In terms of crowd management, we now go from the idea of taming the packs, i.e. favouring a certain form of ‘extended family’ and churning out good Christians, towards a more systematic effort of dissolving the packs. The aim was thus not so much to differentiate the student cohort into groups worthy or unworthy of care. Instead, we can discern the start of a new kind of student standardisation, treating the student as an individual, a pre-family entity and a specific kind of general user (cf. Forty, 2000). In this regard, we must also remember that the student corridor, although deficient in terms of amenities, also offered individual students a new kind of freedom. Former housing had almost always been under the control of an adult – one’s host, like the professor or landlord, or the house mother/father, if one lived in a student home.

6 Women pioneers and student households (reorganising the troops)

Female students started to be admitted to Swedish Universities in the 1870s, and the introduction of women into the university necessitated new cuts to the student population. This separation was based foremost on gender, but was also indirectly related to disciplines (initially, women were only allowed to study certain subjects), and later in relation to emerging student families (and the new category of the family flat). A student association for women was established in Uppsala in 1892, and around 1900 there were discussions about a student nation (never realised) exclusively for women (Frängsmyr, 2010: 23). In Lund, an unofficial student home for six female students opened in 1915 on the ground floor of a professor’s home (Tersmeden & Blom, 2010: 116), but it closed in 1928. In Uppsala, the student housing called *Arkadien*, built by *Södermanlands-Nerikes* student nation in 1937, reserved one floor for 20 female students (Bergold, 1985: 338–9). The first purpose-built student housing exclusively for female students however was the student home *Studentskegården* in Lund from 1937 (Stjernquist, 1987; Torisson, 2026). This was also the first example of student housing that provided kitchens for students. Each floor had a small kitchen, a tearoom, and individual storage possibilities for food and tableware. There were also a drawing room, a library and possibilities for doing laundry and gymnastics in the basement (SOU, 1937: 57). Just a few years later in Uppsala, *Parthenon* opened for 41 female students in 1940 (Fig. 5). *Parthenon* did not have the same standard as *Studentskegården*, but was planned with a reception room on the ground floor, a kitchenette (*pentry*) on each floor and a clubroom with a terrace on the top floor.

In both Lund and Uppsala, the female students exercised an outsized influence in the design of the building and its amenities, and the female student houses were also pioneering. The notion that female students would want to – or were expected to – cook and do their own laundry soon proved true for male students as well. In SOU (1948: 192), it is suggested that one kitchenette on every floor plan should be standard, regardless of gender. In a survey from 1957, it emerged that students who had access to cooking facilities used them, and of those who did not, a third prepared their lunch, dinner, or both, using their own equipment in the room. There were still gender differences – 88% of women and 60% of men reported that they cooked daily (SOU, 1961: 39) – but the issue was important to all students.

⁴In the original Swedish: ‘teologie studerande, som giva hopp om sig att bliva värdiga präster’.

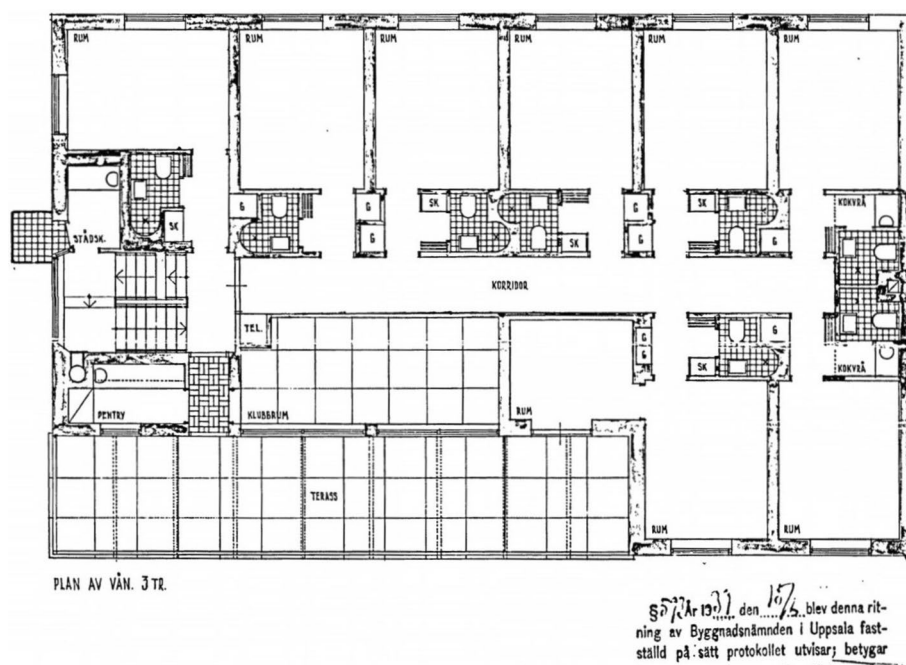


Fig. 5 Parthenon student housing for female students in Uppsala (drawing from 1939). Top floor with roof terrace (Uppsala City Archive). The terrace was abandoned in the construction phase to provide for more rooms

A regularly organised student corridor around 1960 had eight to ten rooms per corridor, including a shared kitchen (SOU, 1961: 31). Common rooms or dining halls were often minimal in Uppsala and Lund but more common in Stockholm and Gothenburg, where meals could not be taken in student canteens (Hellström, 1996). In the SOU from 1961 (1961: 19), student housing is seen as part of a general, post- WWII development that included more autonomous living conditions, also for people, young or old, who were not a part of a family but lived alone. One kitchen per household (either a student corridor or a larger flat for friends or a family to share) thus became the norm.

Parallel to the introduction of the kitchen and the new view of the individual student unit as a household, we also see the introduction of student family flats (SOU, 1948: 187). In 1947, Arthur von Schmalensee and Eskil Sundahl won the competition for a *studentstad* (student city) with their proposal 'Lugna gatan' (the Quiet Street). This was the first larger student house area in Sweden comprised of 435 single corridor rooms and 60 flats, each with two rooms and a kitchen. In 1952, when 28 of these two-room student flats were advertised, 35% of the applicants were student families with children. These two-room flats were not designed for families, but rather for two friends to share, and so the issue of designing family flats came on the agenda (SOU, 1961: 127). The issue was also raised in the press; a 1946 newspaper article in *Aftonbladet* comments on the new student area, questioning whether students were compatible with the crying of children (Aftonbladet, 1946).

The number of married students increased towards the middle of the twentieth century. Amongst the students enrolled between 1920 and 30, only two per cent were married; in

1944, 17.5% of the students were married (SOU, 1948: 72), and in 1960 the number was up to 26% (SOU, 1961, p. 222). The 1960s also saw a surge of new family flats for students that afforded two study places as well as a room for children. In 1960, Uppsala had 242 family flats and Lund-Malmö had 123 (SOU, 1961: 129). By 1969, these numbers had risen to 1,434 and 1,203, respectively (SOU, 1970: 40).

From a crowd management perspective, we can see how the aim was no longer to dissolve the packs, or just to isolate individuals. Instead, students were increasingly viewed as regular adults and the aim (as in housing in general) was to form households that could consist of one or more individuals. The strategic focus on households facilitates discussion of a shift of focus from packs and crowds to masses, or even better, to troops. Troops becomes a more appropriate term than packs at this point for three reasons: Troop connotes a more externally ordered form of social organisation; troops can refer to a variety of different persons and group sizes; and the notion of the troop also reflects the decreasing interest in forming (or dissolving) specific social groups or communities within the student cohort through housing. Troops also entail weaker and less personal social ties than those that bind members of a pack.

7 Student cities (bringing the troops together)

In 1948, the building of larger student areas was still approached with some caution. On the one hand, such areas could be regarded as both economical and practical, but on the other, they were deemed socially problematic, and it was argued that a concentration of hundreds of students might increase the risk of further segregating students from the rest of society (SOU, 1948: 190). An idea that had persisted since the 1950s, was that of integrating double room flats into ordinary housing areas to desegregate students, *insprängda bostäder* (wedged-in housing). In 1957, state subsidies were also granted for integrated student living of this kind (see Thunwall, 1998:351, for a report on this in Uppsala). In the 1960s, student rooms placed in other housing areas were – when subsidised – most common in Gothenburg, where they came to comprise around 22% of all rooms (SOU, 1970: 41). Overall, however, the idea was not very successful. Students' needs and habits differ from those of other households, and the almost contradictory notion of the student city soon came to dominate the debate.

The first student city realised was the above-mentioned *Studentstaden* in Uppsala (1951–53). Whilst a range of services had originally been planned for the area, including a canteen and music room, most of these were replaced by more rooms in the construction phase (Bergold, 1985: 343). This was expanded with *Rackarberget* 1959–65 (see Fig. 6). A plan for a student city in Lund was made public in 1946 (Tägil, 1996), but was only partially constructed. A report in Stockholm in 1947 suggested construction of a student city with 2,000 flats (Hellström, 1996: 94), but this was never built. There had been several smaller projects in Stockholm but not nearly enough for the growing student cohort, leading to the 1959 plan to build 10,000 student flats (Hellström, 1996: 105 ff.). Several projects were completed in the early 1960s, one of the largest of which was the student city at *Stora Lappkärrsberget*, 1968–1970, called *Lappis* (see Fig. 7). With 2,000 student flats, where most rooms were in student corridors, this student area was built just outside the city in connection to the new Stockholm University area *Frescati*. The area also included a grocery store, a restaurant, and



Fig. 6 Lugna Gatan and Rackarberget in Uppsala. Photo from 1966 (by courtesy of Uppland's Museum)

a day-care centre. There were 240 larger flats (two to four rooms) and 1781 single rooms (Hellström, 1996: 119 ff.). Student segregation no longer seemed an issue of great concern; at least it was considered secondary to quantity, and as Hannfors has noted, *Lappis*, may (at least for Stockholm) be seen as 'both the culmination and the endpoint of Swedish student housing in the post-war era' (Hannfors, 2020: 49, our translation).

By the late 1960s, student cities had either been completed or were in construction in all Swedish university cities. *Flogsta* (1968–72) in Uppsala comprises 16 eight-storey houses and 2,400 student rooms in 12-room corridors (Thunwall, 1998, p. 357). At Umeå University, the neighbourhood *Älidhem* (1966–73) was built largely as a student area, and in Lund there was *Delphi* from 1965 to 68 (see Fig. 8) and the student block *Sparta* from 1972. A newspaper article announcing the opening of Sparta at the time called it 'Europe's largest student factory' (cited in Millisdotter, 2010: 2013). The large-scale student cities also opened for new forms of housing, such as a student area in Lund with more than 300 terraced houses clustered around small communal courtyards (*Djingis Khan*), built in 1971–72. Next to Delphi, the area *Kämnärsrätten* was built with more than 500 family flats in 1969, and 750 family flats were built in *Hamberg* next to Flogsta in the early 1970s. These new areas, often dominated by three-room flats, looked rather like any other Swedish housing area of their time.

Student housing was constructed on a smaller scale in the 1950s, and buildings rarely contained more than 100 rooms each. This changed in the 1960s, when units with 300–600 rooms per project were usual. Corridors with one kitchen per 10–12 rooms were the most common (SOU, 1970: 39 ff.). The student house *Domus* in Stockholm drawn by Dag Ribbing and built 1950–52 already had 19 student rooms in a corridor with only one small



Fig. 7 Lappis in Stockholm 2023. Architects: Bengt Lindroos (early stages) & Hans Borgström (photo by author)

kitchen. This was compensated for by the inclusion of a restaurant for 90 guests on the ground floor and other amenities. By the end of the 1960s, we also find large-scale student houses such as *Pireus*, built in Malmö in 1968 (Fig. 9). Nine-storey *Pireus* had one kitchen per 17 student rooms, with one stairwell serving more than 250 students (Eriksson & Ronnefalk, 1998: 170 ff.). In contrast, *Gubbyllan*, the first student house in Uppsala, housed 58 students and was served by two stairwells.

Already in 1907, the German architect and planner Josef Stübben had suggested avoiding buildings with more than 20 flats (Rådberg & Johansson, 1997: 20). The large-scale industrialised housing of the 1960s and 70s also resulted in increasing criticism in the 1970s and 80s. Researchers such as Marcus and Sarkissian suggested a limit of 8–10 flats per stairwell in new buildings, and the British geographer Alcie Coleman argued explicitly against too many flats/families per stairwell, noting that in the worst cases, 100 or more flats may share a stairwell (Rådberg & Johansson, 1997: 47). Large-scale student houses of the 1960s, such as *Pireus*, are thus quite extreme examples in this regard.

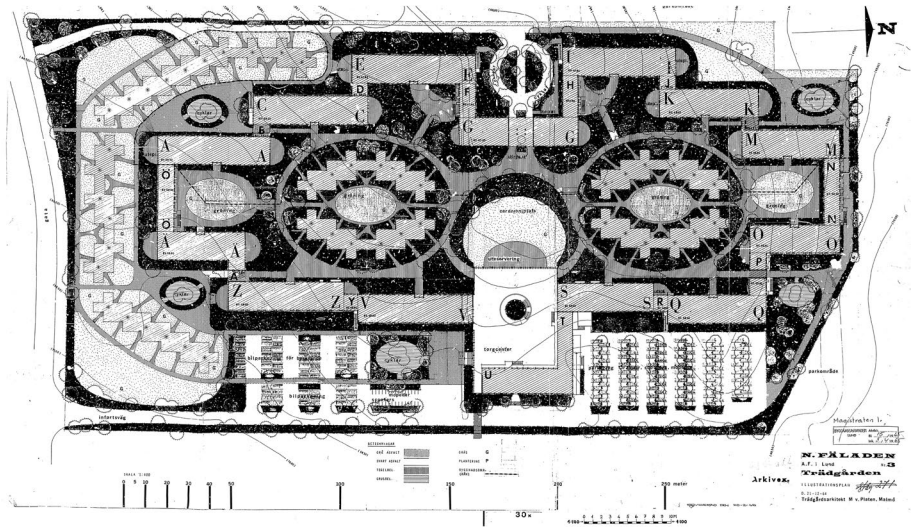


Fig. 8 Plan of Delphi in Lund (1965–68) by Hans Westman. There are student corridors in the larger buildings, four-leaf clover houses on the yard and along the road, and a centre with a shop, restaurant and public bath



Fig. 9 Piræus, Malmö, designed by Bengt Edman. The single stairwell serving the entire building is clearly demarcated in the façade (Unknown photographer, by courtesy of Malmö City Archive)

The development of student housing into a kind of cities partially had its roots in dogmas on rationalisation and industrialisation of housing in the post-war era (Werne, 1997). Economical thinking dominated the design, both in terms of building size and spatial solutions. The large houses were grouped together in ever-growing student areas, increasingly isolated from the rest of the city and society. One could argue, as Thunwall has done, that Swedish students were never more privileged than they were in the 1960s; they had zero-interest loans, state scholarships, and easy access to subsidised accommodation: at the end of the 1960s, there was even a housing surplus (Thunwall, 1998: 349). In the wake of state facilitation however, we also saw an increase of homogenisation and state control.

This background may also facilitate understanding of why the 1960s was also the era of a new student movement, focussed on participation and community, societal transformation, and anti-authoritarian utopianism (Vos, 2011: 299 f.). The ‘burdens of distance’ (Elias Canetti cited in Borch, 2012: 240) and the subsequent call of the crowd, seemingly intensified as regulation, separation and homogenisation increased. Unruly crowds were forming once again. There was the ritual of burning student caps in Lund and Uppsala, and demands to open student facilities to non-students increased (Vos, 2011: 295). A 1967 proposal by the University Chancellor’s Agency for a new university curriculum was met with such fierce protests that the government postponed the proposal, fearing a student revolt (Sköldberg, 1991).

These protests culminated in 1968. Unlike workers in France, Swedish workers did not support the more revolutionary students (Hellström, 1996: 151). Whilst there were some student protests in Sweden – like Denmark and Finland – in 1968, including the occupation of a student union house in May that year, they were less violent than the clashes on the continent. They did not go unnoticed, however. The authors of a government report on youth housing (SOU, 1970) concluded that physical segregation of students in student cities was not a desirable direction for the future, and that other groups could and should be integrated into existing student housing areas (SOU, 1970: 139 f.). They also argued that many student housing companies (owned and operated by the student unions) were large and should be allowed to build for non-students (SOU, 1970: 155), and that they should be reorganised, even integrated into existing public housing companies. An investigation by Gothenburg’s student union in 1969 showed that 64% of students were positive to opening student housing to other young people, leading the government report to note that ‘the risk of massive protests from the students must be considered relatively small’. (SOU, 1970: 116).⁵ An unexpected surplus of student housing in 1970 brought student housing production to a grinding halt and prompted the repurposing and sale of entire student housing areas. The welfare state had caught up with the student housing question. In principle, housing was now more or less available to the whole population, and student housing was no longer a prioritised problem.

⁵ In the original Swedish: ‘risken för ett massivt motstånd från de studerandes sida måste bedömas som relativt liten’.

8 Concluding discussion

In this paper, we have shown that the history of student housing can be read as a history of how to manage student crowds. The years spent as a student are habitually considered a period of rebellion that also plays an important part in the anatomy of a society and its transformation and reproduction. In his article 'The War with Adults', Paul Thompson puts it like this:

For most children, parents are likely to be the best adults they know. It is this which makes their expressions of discontent against other adults, with whom they have less close bonds, such as neighbours, policemen and teachers – in universities as well as schools – of especial significance. They are expressions which need to be understood, not merely in terms of observed acts and stated issues, but as symbolic (and perhaps hopeless) protests against the entire system of adult control of society. (Thompson, 1975: 37)

Resistance is, as Brighenti reminds us, a territorial act, an 'act of deterritorialization' (Brighenti, 2023: 94, see also Brighenti, 2010), i.e. that of leaving a territory. It is also an act that renders visible a certain situation. The student years can be seen as an interstitial moment in life, a unique moment in life where resistance for the first time might seem like an affordable action. The student home is where habits of the parental home emerge as simple, naïve, etc., and where new habits can be formed. It is, however, also a moment of waiting for 'real' life to begin. In his work *Spheres*, Sloterdijk picks up Vilém Flusser's notion of the house, originating as a waiting room of sorts (Sloterdijk, 2016: 473). As the station of the no-longer nomadic Neolithic human, the home was above all a place to stay and wait for crops to become ready for harvest. The home as a waiting place or an interstitial moment of life also comes through in the planning and design of student housing. This aligns well with the ideas of modernistic architecture. In *Großstadtarchitektur* (1927), Hilberseimer compares the house to a hotel, suggesting that for efficiency, closets and cabinets should all be built-in: 'things can no longer be left to chance as was customary until now' (Hilberseimer, 2012: 144). In student housing, this kind of modernist 'hotel utopia' became possible. Furniture could be built in or uniformly made, belonging to the flat rather than to its dweller. In fact, this was already being done for student housing of the nineteenth century, well before Hilberseimer's ideas.

Student homes started out as a way of establishing a good student culture and taming the packs of unruly students. After centuries of dealing with crowds, a series of changes, including the increase of state control over the universities and the introduction of student housing, induced a change. However, the ambition of dissolving crowds and taming packs soon transformed into strategies that were less personal, yet increasingly focussed on the individual. Initially, this new kind of student housing addressed the student as an aspiring individual cog in society's machinery, with university studies as a form of work. It then moved on to consider students as households, i.e. as a kind of proto-family, with a disciplined and individual future breadwinner or a small family. Students were now bundled together in ever-expanding areas and urban districts, assembling into a kind of cities of their own. In the late 1960s, it gradually became clear that these cities were in fact feeding and nurturing

crowds that were larger than ever before.⁶ Coupled with the overproduction of housing, this led to the dramatic conclusion that student areas should be dissolved and integrated into the surrounding city. This conclusion was not unique to Sweden; in 1969, the Canadian scholar Howard Adelman drew a similar conclusion in his study of student housing:

Residences are restricted to a university area virtually walled off from the rest of the world. This segregation narrows one's concept of social responsibility and results in mutual mistrust, suspicion and disrespect. (Adelman, 1969: 101)

It is important to remember that whilst the ongoing experimentation and building of new student housing followed this outline, older formats still lived on. Christian student areas and homes both opened and expanded in the 1950s and 60s. Student homes for international students also opened during this time. In Lund, the International Student Home of 1959 was very much designed according to a troop rather than a pack logic: every other room housed a Swedish student and every other a foreign one (Hamilton, 1959). The very first student homes, *Norrbyhus*, *Fjellstedtska* and *Thomanders*, remain operational, as does *Studentskegården*. Some student barracks lived on in Lund during the first half of the twentieth century, and a late example of this type, *Labbet* (a private student corridor in the form of a furnished attic) opened as late as 1950 and is still operational. Despite the discussed shifts in student housing types, it should thus be remembered that each previous format of student housing also lingered on, contributing to an even more diverse and complex field of housing types.

Summing up, we have on one hand a control and dispersal of the crowd, first isolated as packs, then as individuals, and finally as households. This involved increasing autonomy, and not least, atomisation of the student as an individual. On the other hand, we have increasingly precise and uniform housing design combined with a kind of thrown-togetherness (Massey, 2005), increasingly devoid of community-building aspirations. Together, the development shows a peculiar combination of catering to and caring for students, whilst increasingly leaving them to their own devices. Not least through the evolution of student housing, the students of 1960s and 70s found themselves more detached from the adult world than perhaps ever before in the centuries-long history of the Swedish university. At the same time, they were subsidised and more or less uniformly boxed-in and sheltered. They were also allocated to their own district of the city.

Although Swedish student housing construction came to a sudden halt in the 1970s, the duality of small-scale experimentation and large-scale implementation can be seen again in more recent phenomena, such as student living-labs and urban studentification processes. In fact, the increasing spatial demands of an expanding higher education (Munro et al., 2009), means that the distribution and territorialisation of students through housing is today as topical as ever. For example, it seems clear that the dealing of student crowds and disorder is still a very active field of research (Chenoweth et al., 2024; Woldoff & Weiss, 2018). There is also an ever-increasing series of studies on how the scaling up of student populations and housing have effects on urban, regional and even international levels all over the world (Ghosh & Gupta, 2025; Grabkowska & Frankowski, 2016; He, 2015; Kliebert et al. 2021). From a crowd theoretical perspective, housing works as a distribution system, defining and forming different kinds of social entities. In our times of studentification and internationali-

⁶In fact, this was perhaps the start of a later phenomenon, often discussed as 'the studentification of the city' (Smith, Sage and Balsdon 2014).

sation, i.e. where students (and others) are mixed and distributed in new ways, we argue that this perspective might help us to understand how housing plays an active role in the forming and controlling of student (and other) cohorts. These formations might not least be important to assess in relation to the recent proliferation of different ‘studentscapes’ reshaping our cities (Zasina et al., 2023). In the article, we have argued that crowd theory can be used not only in its classical notion, i.e. to investigate the direct management and formation of crowds in public space (Borch, 2012) but also to study the management of crowds through housing. A crowd theory that also brings in material actors presents a unique way of linking the material stabilisation and territorialisation (through housing) to questions of public life and control (cf. Amin, 2012). Now as then, populations are managed, distributed and subdivided through built form. We suggest that crowd theory, with a focus on how social and built forms develop together, offers a useful way to explore these issues further. We also hope that it might inspire studies that link (student) distribution, control and housing together, rather than treating them as separate matters.

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Data availability The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

Ethical approval The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. The empirical research is based on archival material and literature and did not involve any human participants.

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