

The Transformation of a Model

- 1 “Utsatta områden – sociala risker, kollektiv förmåga och oönskade händelser” [Vulnerable areas—social risks, collective capacity and unwanted incidents] (Stockholm: Polismyndigheten, Nationella operativa avdelningen, December 2015). See also “Riktade statsbidrag för socioekonomiskt utsatta områden” [Targeted government grants for socioeconomically vulnerable areas] (Stockholm: Riksdagen, 2020). For a study of vulnerable areas, see Manne Gerrell et al., eds., *Att vända utvecklingen: från utsatta områden till trygghet och delaktighet* [Reversing the trend: from deprived areas to safety and inclusion] (Malmö Universitet, 2020), 59–67.
- 2 See *Et Danmark uden parallelsamfund – Ingen ghettos i 2030* [One Denmark without parallel societies—no ghettos by 2030] (Copenhagen: Økonomi og indenrigsministeriet, 2018). For a critical discussion of the racial and punitive consequences, see: “Disguised Racism: Denmark’s discriminatory, punitive and counterproductive Ghetto Package” (Euro-Med Monitor, February 2022). <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/4898/Disguised-Racism-Denmark-s-discriminatory-punitive-and-counterproductive-Ghetto-Package>.
- 3 Erling Annaniassen and Bo Bengtsson, *Varför så olika? nordisk bostadspolitik i jämförande historiskt ljus* [Why so different? Nordic housing policy in a comparative historic light] (Malmö, Égalité, 2006), 160–66, see also Kristian Berg, “Det stora bostadsbyggandet” [The large-scale construction of housing], in *Rekordåren: en epok i svenskt bostadsbyggande* [The record years: an era in Swedish housing construction], ed. Thomas Hall (Karlskrona: Boverket, 1999), 24–30.

In 2015, the Swedish Police Authority introduced a new classification of neighborhoods (*bostadsområden*) into “vulnerable,” “particularly vulnerable,” and “especially vulnerable.” The classification into different *stages* of vulnerability was based on the inhabitants’ socioeconomic status, unemployment rate, and reported criminal activity in the area. With few exceptions, the housing areas classified were built between 1965 and 1974 and were part of Sweden’s so called *Miljonprogram* (Million Program), a state-initiated program aiming to stimulate the building of affordable housing to a good standard for the general public. The Police Authority’s report stated that the typical urban layouts of a *Miljonprogram* area, with its traffic separation, green commons, and clearly defined enclaves of houses, made it hard and dangerous or even impossible for the police to carry out their work—the call to take action was urgent.¹

Identifying housing areas with particular needs and expected problems, which in turn are to be met and solved through extraordinary measures and strategies (often involving the reconfiguration and transformation of the built environment) suggests intriguing parallels with the Danish *Ghettoplan* (“Ghetto” package) from 2018.² However, in terms of this book’s topic, architecture and welfare, I want to emphasize the explicit use of *housing typologies* and *urban form* as indicators of societal problems and criminality by a Swedish state authority. Several postwar mass housing estates built during the *Miljonprogram* era (1965–74) have been identified as vulnerable, and since the mid-1980s, subject to ambitious state-funded area-based interventions aiming to support their transformation and change. Under the name of modernization, sustainability, and restoration, *Miljonprogram* areas have been rebuilt and reconfigured to a larger or smaller extent. The scale of the public and market-led investment involved in such initiatives cannot be ignored. They suggest new types of political engagement in mass housing, involving new forms of financialization and architectural aesthetics, together with an explicit withdrawal from the universal tradition of Swedish housing policy established in the immediate postwar years—i.e., the aim of providing high-quality housing for all regardless of location or region.³

In the late 1970s, a shift in housing politics emerged as overarching national housing programs were exchanged for locally initiated, area-based interventions. In this essay, I navigate this shift by closely reading the material history of the large-scale mass housing project Navestad in the industrial city of Norrköping in central Sweden. I trace the materialization and dematerialization of the housing estate from its first manifestation as an architectural scale model in 1968 to its transformation into New Navestad in 2003. Pinpointing in this narrative three central policy documents in the history of housing politics in Sweden—*Bostadscociala Utredningen* (1945),



Karl-Erik Anebäck, director of Norrköpings Hyresbostäder, with a plan drawing of Navestad housing estate, pictured in the 1968 promotion pamphlet for the estate.

Architectural scale model of Navestad displayed at a press conference at the Norrköping municipality's public housing association, Norrköpings Hyresbostäder, in 1968.



- 4 *Navestad Bostadskomfort i Fritidsmiljö* [Navestad Residential comfort in a leisure environment] (Norrköping: Stiftelsen Norrköpings Hyresbostäder, 1968).
- 5 Lennart Bergentz, *Vi byggde Norrköping* [We built Norrköping] (Norrköping: Norrköpings byggmästareförening, 1993), 72–77.
- 6 Original quote in Swedish: “Idealbostaden, finns den? Och hur ska den vara beskaffad? De flesta människor har en vision av hur den egna bostaden bör se ut. En del drömmer om villan-markbostaden, för andra är bostaden i höghuset den ideala bostadsformen. Behoven och önskemålen skiftar, det är så många faktorer som påverkar valet av bostad, men alla vill ha en bostad, som är välplanerad, komfortabel och lättskött. [...]. Den koncentrerade men samtidigt omväxlande bebyggelsen, som anpassats efter den vackra naturen, har utformats för att passa den moderna människans krav på bostadskomfort i fritidsmiljö. I Navestad kommer att beredas plats för alla kategorier av människor, ensamstående och familjer, pensionärer och barn, för alla måste det finnas utrymme. Karl-Erik Anebäck, Norrköpings Stads Stiftelse Hyresbostäder.” The quote, signed by Karl-Erik Anebäck, is extracted from the introduction of the presentation folder *Navestad Bostadskomfort i Fritidsmiljö*, 2.

Miljonprogrammet (1965), and *Kretsloppsmiljarden* (1995)—I speculate that Navestad operated as a *model* (an exemplar, pattern, or ideal that materialized in paper, concrete, and even rubble) revealing the changing nature, of the intersection between architecture, politics, and finance in the Swedish welfare model.

Built in 1968–72 to meet an acute housing shortage, Navestad was planned as two gigantic housing rings, each containing nearly a thousand housing units, complemented by an extensive field of 350 densely placed, low-rise, single-family homes.⁴ A large and ambitious site-specific art project was part of the project, as was a novel building system of prefabricated concrete panels.⁵ With its mix of high-rise and low-rise, as well as its ambitious public art project and high-quality architecture, Navestad constitutes one of the most extensive and elaborate public housing projects to be built in Sweden in the postwar period. However, suffering from a high level of vacancies and low demand, the estate was perceived as a failed project even before its completion in 1972, and at the turn of the new millennium, after a series of renovations and alterations had already taken place, Navestad was subject to an extensive “turn-around” project that radically transformed its architecture and halved the number of housing units. Despite these massive investments in the estate, Navestad was, and still is, identified by the Swedish Police Authority as a typical “vulnerable area” associated with social unrest, criminality, and low attractiveness. How, then, in terms of the specific history of the Navestad housing estate, has the interconnection of welfare and architecture played out?

THE MODEL: MASS HOUSING IN SWEDEN

The ideal home—does it exist? And what should it be like? Most people have a vision of what their own home should look like. Some dream of a ground-level villa; for others, a residence in a high-rise building is the ideal housing form. Needs and desires change; however, while many factors affect the choice of a home, everyone wants a home that is well-planned, comfortable, and easy to maintain.... The concentrated and varied buildings, adapted to the beautiful natural landscape, have been designed to suit modern man’s demands for residential comfort in a leisure environment. In Navestad, space will be provided for all categories of people—singles and families, pensioners and children—there must be room for everyone.⁶

— Karl-Erik Anebäck,
Norrköpings Stads Stiftelse Hyresbostäder

The room was crowded when the architectural scale model of Navestad was first revealed to the public in February 1968 at the headquarters of Norrköpings Stads Stiftelse Hyresbostäder (the municipality of Norrköping’s association for rental housing). The housing association had invited the press to a preview of its most ambitious and large-scale mass housing project to date, and the interest was overwhelming. A snapshot shows serious-looking men in suits squeezing around the large model, pointing and discussing. Among the men, two women angle toward the model table, trying to get a glimpse. The ladies appear to be vividly engaged in discussion

- 7 Ahlin would collaborate with a local architect, Boris Sjö, in the development and execution of the Navestad housing estate. See further Pär Eliaeson, "Exemplet Navestad" [The Navestad example], *Tidskriften Rum*, October 2000, 30–33.
- 8 Björn Fontander, "Jättehus för 250 miljoner ger bostäder åt 6000" [Giant building worth 250 million provides housing for 6,000], *Dagens Nyheter*, February 13, 1968.

with Eric Ahlin, the architect behind the scheme, and his colleague Boris Sjö.⁷ Present in the room is also the renowned and outspoken director of Norrköpings Hyresbostäder, Karl-Erik Anebäck, as well as representatives from Norrköpings Panelfabrik (the Norrköping concrete panel factory) and the concrete company Skånska Cementgjuteriet AB, which would not only build Navestad but later become the multinational global construction giant Skanska.

The national and local press closely followed the evolution of the Navestad housing project from the initial planning proposals in 1968 to its inauguration in 1972. On February 13, 1968, a full-length article was published in the daily liberal paper *Dagens Nyheter* with the headline "Jättehus för 250 miljoner ger bostäder åt 6000" (Gigantic building worth 250 million provides housing for 6,000), describing the high stakes surrounding the Navestad project. In the piece, journalist Björn Fontander notes that even before the project had been presented to the public, a stream of architects and delegations from different municipalities had visited Norrköpings Hyresbostäder's head office to view this impressive model of a project that would solve Norrköping's housing shortage in one go. The article describes the project, with its two large circular housing blocks—"each big enough to house the Colosseum of Rome"—as "futuristic." Within the outer housing rings, each 270 meters in diameter, an inner housing circle was planned. Between the inner and outer circle, a car-free street was raised over an undercroft garage that provided direct underground access to emergency and service vehicles. Impressed, Fontander stated that all households would be provided with parking for one to two cars and that the garage would be accessed directly by elevators from the housing units. The car-free street should be lined with trees, and instead of cars, playgrounds and sandpits would be arranged for smaller children, who could easily be surveyed from the balconies of the spacious dual-aspect apartments (which generally comprised of two bedrooms, a large living room, and a spacious well-equipped kitchen). All the entrances to the houses were oriented toward this calm, car-free street, and each of the three sections of the circular ring also opened up to form a small piazza where kindergarten and schools were located. The inner courtyard, on the other hand, Fontander notes, was planned for the older children laid out as a large, open common with several sports fields, including a circular ice rink. Fontander goes on to underline that beyond the courtyards, the rolling landscape of Vinsta forest offered further recreational spaces for winter and summer sports. In addition, where the two housing circles met, he tells the reader, a comprehensive service center with shops, schools, a swimming pool, a youth center, and a church would provide residents with everything they needed, including (although not yet confirmed) a "local police station British style."⁸

A month later, the left-wing tabloid paper *Aftonbladet* reported on the new housing scheme in Norrköping with a slightly different emphasis. Illustrated with a full image of the Navestad model and with the poetic headline "Att bo mellan trånga och vida rum" (To live between narrow and wide spaces), the article praised Navestad for the new and unconventional, strategy of combining formalism with functionality:

- 9 Original quote in Swedish: "Stadsplanen kan sägas vara en återgång till formalismen i stadsbyggandet. Men det är en ny slags formalism som ingenting har med de gamla kulissuppställningarna att göra utan är en produkt av funktionalistiska idéer befriade från slentrian-tänkande. [...] Stadsplanen ger en spänning mellan intimitet och stor rymd. Med olika hushöjder i de stora cirkelarna klarar man kravet på solbelysning och får en intressant rytm. Skillnaden mellan Navestad projektet och tidigare byggda cirkelhus är framförallt detta rumsliga spänningsförhållande, denna rörelse." Torsten Frennberg, "Att bo mellan trånga och vida rum" [To live between narrow and wide spaces], *Aftonbladet*, March 5, 1968.
- 10 Lars Kvarnström, Dan Malmström, and Hans Nilsson, "Befolkning och boende" [Population and housing], in *Norrköpings historia: 1900-talet*, ed. Hans Nilsson (Linköping: Centrum för lokalhistoria, Linköpings universitet, 2000), 22–93.
- 11 Annaniassen and Bengtsson, *Värför så olika?* 160–66.
- 12 Formally, the Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party, SAP (*Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti*) is usually referred to as the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterna).
- 13 SOU (1945:63) *Slutbetänkande avgivet av Bostadssociala utredningen. Del 1. Allmänna riktlinjer för den framtida bostadspolitik. Förslag till låne- och bidragsformer* [Final report of the Social housing survey. Part 1. General guidelines for future housing policy. Proposals for loan and grant schemes] (Stockholm: Socialdepartementet, 1945). See also Berg, "Det stora bostadsbyggandet."

The urban plan can be seen as a return to formalism in city planning. But it is a new kind of formalism, unrelated to the old façade arrangements, rather a product of functionalist ideas free from conventional thinking. ... The urban plan creates a tension between intimacy and vastness. With varying building heights within its large circles, it meets the requirements for sunlight and creates an interesting rhythm. The difference between the Navestad project and previous circular buildings is primarily this spatial tension, this movement.⁹

The Swedish national press's engagement in this local mass housing project is noteworthy. As Sweden's first distinctly industrial city, Norrköping had a long history of precarious housing conditions and extreme housing shortages. From the mid-1800s onward, Norrköping grew to become Sweden's third-largest city, succeeding Stockholm as the country's leading center for textile production. The city, however, was famous not only for its prosperous textile industries but also for having one of the worst housing situations in Sweden, and even in Europe. Sweden's intense economic development in the postwar years had created not only a severe shortage of housing but also of labor. Providing affordable housing was thus not only a matter of caring for the less privileged and the poor but also a means to attract industrial workers to move to the city.¹⁰ The lack of workforce, soaring building costs, and a real shortage of affordable housing were pressing issues in Norrköping, just as they were in Sweden in general at this time, and the housing issue engaged the political establishment on both the right and the left. The national press eagerly followed the Social Democratic-dominated Norrköping's ambition to develop a viable and cost effective model for housing the masses.

The dominant model for providing affordable mass housing in Sweden in the first part of the twentieth century was a cooperative housing model based on a membership system and collective savings toward a home. Well-known cooperative housing associations such as Hyresgästernas Sparkasse- och Byggnadsförening (HSB), founded in 1923, and Riksbyggen, founded in 1941, are still active today. Cooperatives generally build housing for private ownership but also maintain a stock of rental housing.¹¹ However, with the Socialdemokratiska arbetareparti (SAP, the Social Democratic Workers' Party) in power from 1932, a new model for mass housing started to take form, wherein rental housing would dominate.¹²

1945: A GOVERNMENT REPORT ON HOUSING —BOSTADSSOCIALA UTREDNINGEN

To survey the pressing housing situation in Sweden, a national housing study, *Bostadssociala utredningen* (The social housing investigation) was initiated in 1933. After more than a decade of thorough housing research, the study culminated in two final reports, one delivered in 1945 and one in 1947, which advanced the groundbreaking proposal that municipalities should be given extended rights to plan and control housing provision through a form of "planning monopoly."¹³ This radical—and not uncontroversial—proposition would transform the provision of housing in Sweden and open the

- 14 For a comprehensive history of “allmännyttan,” see Kias Ramberg, *Allmännyttan: välfärdsbygge 1850–2000* [Public housing: welfare building 1850–2000] (Stockholm: Bygghuset, 2000).
- 15 The report also opened the way for powerful new collaborations between private and public actors. See Thord Strömberg, “Historien om bostadsmarknadens politisering: socialdemokraterna och bostadsfrågan” [The history of housing market politicization: social democrats and the housing question], in *Socialdemokraternas samhälle: SAP och Sverige under 100 år* [The society of social democracy: SAP and Sweden over 100 years], ed. Klaus Misgeld et al. (Stockholm: Tiden, 1989), 145–67.
- 16 Thomas Hall, ed., *Rekordåren: en epok i svenskt bostadsbyggande* [The record years: an era in Swedish housing construction] (Karlskrona: Boverket, 1999).
- 17 Martin Grander, “Allmännyttan och jämlikheten: Svensk bostadspolitik vid vägskalet?” [Public housing and equality: Swedish housing policy at a crossroads?], Research report (Stockholm: SNS, 2020), 64. <https://mau.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:1453153>.
- 18 Strömberg, “Historien om bostadsmarknadens politisering,” 145–67.
- 19 The tower blocks were planned as part of a larger housing area built by the housing cooperation HSB and primarily intended for larger families, but Sårkullen chartered for a broader group in society. See Ramberg, *Allmännyttan: välfärdsbygge 1850–2000*, 115–19.
- 20 Ahlin won the competition with his equally young colleague, the architect Bo Ringers. They collaborated on several housing projects in Stockholm during the 1950s.
- 21 “Bostadspolitik: svensk politik för boende, planering och byggande under 130 år” [Housing policy: Swedish housing, planning and construction policy over 130 years] (Karlskrona: Boverket 2007), 61–62.

way for the establishment of *allmännyttan* (non-profit housing associations) under the purview of the country's municipalities.¹⁴ To control escalating building costs, the report recommended that *allmännyttan* build and develop housing entirely under their own administration, wholly acting as contractor developers. The new role allocated to municipal housing associations—now planners, developers, and builders—would significantly increase the rate and volume of production of affordable public housing in Sweden.¹⁵

The period initiated by the release of the Bostadssociala utredningen final report is, in the Swedish context, often referred to as *rekordåren* (the record years), alluding to the unprecedented volume of housing that was constructed in the form of single-family houses, row houses, and more extensive mass housing estates across Sweden. A quarter of the country's housing stock was built in 1950–75, in its totality constituting a significant national architectural heritage.¹⁶

The new role of the municipality in providing and building up a new stock of housing was paralleled by the extensive demolition of the older residential buildings in towns and cities across Sweden, including in Norrköping, in the 1960s. The demolition and slum clearance programs in both the inner cities and in more rural contexts were driven by concerns that the older housing stock, with its poor standards, would remain on the market as a less expensive alternative to new construction projects, undermining the ambition to raise the standard of housing and make it affordable for all.¹⁷ Understood in this context, the recommendations of Bostadssociala utredningen established the logic for a new radical housing politics that aimed to avoid speculation by providing enough, or even a surplus of, affordable high-standard housing—in fact, to build so much housing that the shortage, the lack, would be erased and a market driven by speculation on housing shortage would be undermined.¹⁸

SERVING SOCIETY; THE CIVIC ARCHITECT

With its pressing housing shortage, Norrköping was among the first cities to follow the recommendations of the Bostadssociala utredningen. The year after the first report was presented, 1946, Stiftelsen Norrköpings Hyresbostäder, was founded and the first initiative to build municipal public housing was initiated with the housing area of Sårkullen. Located on the city's edge, four tower blocks were to provide housing for nurses and doctors from the nearby hospital.¹⁹ The young Stockholm architect Eric Ahlin won the open architectural competition for the apartment towers together with Bo Ringers.²⁰ Having graduated only two years earlier, Ahlin had worked for Bostadsstyrelsen (the National Board of Housing), a new state authority for housing research established through the Bostadssociala utredningen.²¹

Informed by the new housing policies that emerged from the report, Ahlin wrote an article in *Byggmästaren* (the Swedish architectural review) pointing to the acute need to provide housing for the industrial worker and discussing necessary strategies for such a development. In the article, “Industrins Bostadsproblem” (The industry's housing problem), Ahlin argued that providing affordable housing for industrial workers was too crucial for Sweden's

- 22 Eric Ahlin, "Industrins bostadsproblem" [The industry's housing problem], *Byggmästaren*, no. 8 (1945): 132.
- 23 For the Sâpkullen project, Ahlin put forward the innovative idea for a "stretchy" apartment by organizing the floorplan so that the bedroom had an individual entrance, allowing the tenants to expand or shrink their homes according to their economic situation. Sâpkullen, with its "stretchy" apartments, was presented two years after in Eric Ahlin "Västra Sâpkullen i Norrköping. Ett kommunalt bostadsprojekt" [Västra Sâpkullen in Norrköping. A municipal housing project], *Byggmästaren*, no. 22 (1947): 318.
- 24 Lars Sandell, ed., *Hyresbostäder: 1946–1996* (Norrköping: Hyresbostäder i Norrköping, 1996), 77–96.
- 25 Bergentz, *Vi byggde Norrköping*, 73.
- 26 Bergentz, *Vi byggde Norrköping*, 72. For the history of concrete precast panel systems, see Erik Stenberg, "D4-gruppen 1955–1961: Pioneers of the Swedish Post War Panel Era," in *Flying Panels: How concrete panels changed the world*, ed. Pedro Ignacio Alonso and Hugo Palmarola (Berlin: DOM Publishers Berlin, 2019), 210–38. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organized by and presented at ArkDes—The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design, October 18, 2019–March 1, 2020.

industrial development to be left to the market. Similarly, the old system, whereby industry provided housing for its workers, must be revised. In the pressing housing situation, Ahlin argued that the most critical task was to create good, affordable housing for a flexible workforce that was free to follow the work rather than depend on employers for accommodation.²² Housing as a necessary infrastructure for developing a prosperous modern industrial society informed Ahlin's argument. The provision of good, healthy, comfortable housing to everyone, everywhere, was a key to welfare and industrial development, he suggested.²³

By winning the competition for Sâpkullen in 1946, Ahlin would start a long-lasting collaboration with Norrköpings Hyresbostäder that would last over four decades. After designing Sâpkullen's tower blocks on the west side of Norrköping, Ahlin was commissioned to take part in developing several new neighborhoods in primarily the southern part of Norrköping, where a total of nearly 12,000 dwellings were to be built between 1946 and 1972.²⁴ The swathe of public housing stretching out into the rolling open landscape for half a Swedish mile was concluded with the Navestad housing rings, which can be understood, in all their magnitude and monumentality, as the crescendo of Norrköpings Hyresbostäder and Ahlin's oeuvre in Norrköping.

THE FACTORY: PRODUCTION, INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND MASS HOUSING

With several estates built and the first part of the larger-scale housing estate of Hageby under construction, the Norrköpings Hyresbostäder rental housing association looked to increase and rationalize housing production even further. In 1964, the association formed a joint company, Norrköpings Byggelement, together with the leading concrete producer in Sweden, Skånska Cementgjuteri. With a factory producing concrete panels locally, the association took a step further in their role as developers, commissioning and building houses for the municipality and delivering building materials through a private-public partnership. With prioritized building rights on land owned by the city, Norrköpings Hyresbostäder now occupied a dominant position in relation to Norrköping's housing market. Their collaboration with a private construction firm was, however, politically complex in a municipal government dominated by the Social Democratic party, as was their commitment to limiting the need for manual construction labor; these factors contributed to its dynamic director, Karl-Erik Aneback, losing his previously strong position in municipal politics.²⁵

The establishment of the concrete factory was preceded by extensive research and visits to international factories producing concrete panels. Norrköpings Hyresbostäder again commissioned Ahlin; together with the engineer Arne Johansson, a professor of construction at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, he was to develop a new method and production system for precast concrete panels.²⁶ The system developed by Ahlin and Johansson, the so-called *Norrköpingsmodellen* (The Norrköping model), was based on predefining a catalog of elements in measurements and sizes that could be combined in various configurations. Room-sized



Designed by Erik Ahlin, this housing estate in Norrköping was the first to be built in prefabricated concrete panels, delivered by Norrköpings Panelfabrik. The panels had a relief pattern by the silversmith Sigurd Persson and curved concrete balconies. Photograph by Sune Sundahl for the magazine *Betongindustrin*, 1964.



Navestad's housing estate under construction in the winter of 1969. The new industrial building methods that Erik Ahlin and Arne Johansson developed for Norrköpings panel fabrik allowed for construction during the winter. Note the snow on the concrete panels and building cranes.

- 27 Erik Stenberg, ed., *Structural Systems of the Million Program Era*, (Stockholm: KTH School of Architecture, 2013), 67, and Thordis Arrhenius and Marcelo Rovina Torres, eds., *RE/07* (Stockholm: KTH School of Architecture, 2024), 34–49. <https://remasterstudio.com/re-07/>.
- 28 Bergentz, *Vi byggde Norrköping*, 73.
- 29 Bergentz, *Vi byggde Norrköping*, 72–73.
- 30 Original quote in Swedish: “Vid detaljprojekteringen kommer stor omsorg att ägnas fasadutformningen och samarbete med konstnärer beträffande detaljer att ske.” Quote from Bo Sylvan, *Einar Höste* (Lund: Signum, 2005), 61.

outer walls, slabs, and stairs served as the load-bearing structure, while parallel interior walls separated spaces into rooms. Openings such as windows and doors were standardized and pre-fitted in the factory. To achieve the concentric shapes, such as those required by the scheme for Navestad, the slab panels were tilted to maintain the system of rectangular façade panels when creating more complex forms. The visible joints between the façade panels and the floor slab were designed to lock when stacked into each other, rationalizing the building process and allowing for soundproofing and ventilation of the structure through the open joint. Overall, the Norrköping model was technologically advanced and driven by meticulous attention to detail, allowing for both variations and repetition within the system.²⁷

The first area where the industrially produced concrete panels were used was in South Hageby, next to Navestad, through a custom-made town plan drawn by Ahlin, who also designed a large part of the housing stock. Featuring separated traffic systems, the plan was adapted to accommodate the tracks for the cranes that would lift the concrete elements. Skånska Cementgjuteriet cast the foundations on-site, but the frame came in ready-cast elements directly from the nearby factory, Norrköpings panelfabrik.²⁸

TECHNOLOGY AND ART

In developing a new system for precast building elements in concrete, Ahlin cooperated not only with engineers but also initiated a strong collaboration with artists to explore the possibilities of mass production. Using different aggregates and concrete mixes to create variations of surfaces on the precast façade elements, the experiments started with large-scale concrete panels for Hageby’s shopping center, executed in nearly classical geometrical forms, and continued in the Hageby housing area in Porten, where a white, marble-mixed concrete that reflected the light was used. The façade panels were cast using a flatbed mold with relief pattern inlays designed by the industrial designer and silversmith Sigurd Persson.²⁹ The result was a richly ornamented façade that, together with elegantly curved balcony fronts in smooth white concrete, suggested an architecture far from the frugal functionalism associated with mass housing in Sweden.

While the experimental use of factory-produced precast panels in Hageby suffered from initial technical problems, including leakage and yellowing concrete, ambitions remained high. With the factory up and running, the planning of the next large-scale housing complex, Navestad, with its two double rings of housing, would take the method of building complex forms with precast panels and the integration of art and architecture to a new level. The city plan for Navestad, dated June 28, 1966, states that the development should have an extra-high level of architectural refinement; in particular, “specific care will be taken in designing the façade and collaboration with artists regarding façade details will take place.”³⁰

At an early stage in the planning process for Navestad, Ahlin started to collaborate with Arne Jones, an established artist who had made several significant public artworks in Sweden. Jones was already familiar to Norrköping; in 1961, his sculpture *Spiral åtbörd*, a rotating spiral in aluminum sheeting, was installed in front of

- 31 Arne Jones' abstract sculpture *Spiral åtbörd* created a vivid public debate about the elitism of modern art, but when Norrköping's main department store, *Spiralen* (the Spiral), used Jones' sculpture as its logotype, *Spiral åtbörd* caught the public imagination and has since been used in various ways as a symbol for the city of Norrköping. See "Spiral åtbörd, Arne Jones (1914–1976)," Norrköpings konstmuseum, accessed October 4, 2024, <https://www.norrkopingskonstmuseum.se/offentlig-konst/spiral-atbord-1961-arne-jones-1914-1976/>.
- 32 Eric Ahlin is interviewed in a study of Navestad from 1998 by the architects Nilsson Samuelsson and Pär Eliasson. This is one of the very few instances in which the collaboration between Jones and Ahlin has been documented and confirmed by Ahlin. See Nilsson Samuelsson and Pär Eliasson, "Exemplet Navestad – arkitektur och politik i Sverige 1998" [The example of Navestad—architecture and politics in Sweden 1998], accessed October 4, 2024, <http://pe-ark.com/navestad1998/exempel/>.
- 33 There is sparse information on how the collaboration between Jones and Ahlin took place. However, according to the art historian and later director of Norrköping Art Museum Bo Sylvan, Jones was deeply involved in the design of façade details. See Sylvan, *Einar Höste*, 59–74. Several study models of Navestad can be found in Västernorrland museum's Arne Jones collection.
- 34 "Tävlan om ordnande och konstnärlig utsmyckning av tre torgmiljöer" [Competition for the organization and decoration of three squares], announcement in several national papers including *Göteborgsposten*, October 2, 1967, see also Kristian Romare, *Tre torg i Navestad* [Three squares in Navestad] (Norrköping: Norrköpings museum, 1968).
- 35 Original quote in Swedish: "Detta förslag är stort tänkt och fullföljer den arkitektoniska idé som ligger till grund för Navestad." Cited in Sylvan, *Einar Höste*, 62.
- 36 Sylvan, *Einar Höste*, 59–74.
- 37 Eliasson, "Exemplet Navestad," 30–33.
- 38 Einar Höste and Arne Jones were both part of the exhibition *Konst i Betong* [Art in concrete] at Modern Museum in 1964. See the catalogue for the exhibition: Pontus Hultén and Olle Rinman, *Konst i betong* [Art in concrete] (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1964).

Norrköping's leading art museum, generating a vivid discussion on the role of public art.³¹ In collaboration with Ahlin, Jones made several sketch models of Navestad, studying the composition of the circular building volumes and how light and shadow were distributed on the curved façades. In an interview in 1996, Ahlin emphasized Jones' fundamental impact on the project's sculptural composition in the landscape.³² Jones also attended to the architectural details of the houses. He designed the balconies, which, with their trapezoidal plan and light-colored concrete with a half-moon pattern, created a distinct modulation of the façade. Further and more significantly, in collaboration with Ahlin, Jones elaborated on the repetition and stacking of individual housing units in the composition of the overall façades, integrating art into the building system in a novel way. When the individual room-sized façade units, ornamented with a fluted pattern designed by Jones, were stacked together, they created giant pilasters on the façade, a form of mass ornament that bestowed a sense of monumentality to the project. The public art commissioned for Navestad underlined this theme of repetition, using identical industrially produced parts that, together, formed a larger, unique, and monumental whole.³³

In 1967, Norrköping's art museum and Norrköpings Hyresbostäder launched a competition for the public art in Navestad. Jones was represented in the jury, and the renowned artist Einar Höste won with his large-scale proposal, *Genomgående skålform* (Continuous bowl shape).³⁴ Höste's proposal went beyond the competition brief, which asked for three squares to be adorned with individual art pieces, to instead incorporate the whole colossal housing ring in his scheme. The jury's motivation for the first prize read: "This proposal is ambitiously conceived and adheres to the fundamental architectural concept of Navestad."³⁵

Höste's sculpture was composed of 57 sculptural elements evenly distributed along the pedestrian street between the circular structures, with a particular concentration in two of the three squares. Each element consisted of a sandblasted, gently concave, rhomboid aluminum plate supported by aluminum square columns of varying heights, ranging from 3 to 13 meters. The individual sculptural elements of the work were strategically placed to collectively form fragments of an enormous bowl, with its center situated in the heart of the housing ring.³⁶ The artwork also included outdoor furniture, playgrounds, paving, and ornamental details for planting boxes and the children's sandpits all designed by Höste in collaboration with both Jones and Ahlin. Like the architecture of the housing rings, Höste's and Jones' art was built of individual compositional fragments that, together through their arrangement in space, formed a larger whole: a colossal sculpture. Indeed the integration of art and architecture, functionality and form, dominated both the conception and the production of Navestad's mass housing project. As suggested by the architect and critic Pär Eliasson, one of the few who has studied the formal composition of Navestad's architecture in more detail, the public art in Navestad, with its allusions to the monumental architectural qualities of the numerical organization of the two double-housing rings, took on mythical, almost cosmic, dimensions.³⁷ Although today it is both altered and neglected, Höste's sculpture in Navestad remains one of Sweden's most comprehensively executed public artworks.³⁸



The first of the two housing rings in Navestad was finished in 1971. The local photographer Lennart Jansson followed the evolution of the housing estate from laying the foundation to the first tenants moving in. These images show the pedestrian lane between the housing rings, which featured playgrounds, sandpits, and artwork designed by Einar Høste and Arne Jones.



The pedestrian lane between the low-rise and high-rise buildings in Navestad with balconies and entrances. Part of Einar Höste's monumental artwork can also be seen. Photograph by Lennart Jansson, 1971.



In 1972, when the second housing ring in Navestad was completed, Lennart Jansson started documenting how the children played in the open spaces. The inner circular courtyard, with its sports fields, newly planted trees, and landscaped grounds, functioned as a large open playground for older children.

39 Olof Eriksson, *Byggbeställare i brytnings-tid: bostadssektorn och statligt byggande under miljonprogramperioden* [Building clients at a time of change: the housing sector and state construction during the Million Program period] (Stockholm: Statens råd för byggnadsforskning, 1994), 157–66.

40 Based on an industrial worker salary, the aim was that the rent for a family should not be more than 20 percent of the family income. Hall, *Rekordåren: en epok i svenskt bostadsbyggande*, 25.

41 See Berg, “Det stora bostadsbyggandet,” 24–30.

42 SOU (1965:32) *Höjd bostadsstandard* [Raised building standards] (Stockholm: Prisma, 1965), 32. See also Eriksson, *Byggbeställare i brytnings-tid*, 47–78.

43 Alan Skarne, *Med kran och krok* (Stockholm: Ohlsson & Skarne Byggtförlag, 1987), 11–24. See also Eriksson, *Byggbeställare i brytnings-tid*, 157–61.

1965: A NATIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM —MILJONPROGRAMMET

Navestad was realized as part of *Miljonprogrammet*—the program guiding the construction of one million housing units across Sweden between 1965 and 1974. On a national level, the program was part of a state effort to control an overheated building market, where the shortage of housing and construction workers kept inflating the cost of building.³⁹ Even before the program was launched, the rate of housing production in Sweden was high—nearly on the same level as in the years after the program was established. While the cost targets formulated in the 1945 *Bostadssociala utredningen* had mainly been reached by the mid-1950s, the housing shortage persisted.⁴⁰ Low, regulated rents, in combination with continued strong urbanization rates, had created growing housing queues that were increasingly burdensome for the ruling Social Democratic party, which was accused of creating a *kö-samhälle* (a society of queues), where you had to line up for welfare.⁴¹

A new governmental investigation, *Bostadsbyggnadsutredningen* (The residential building investigation), was appointed in 1957; led by the influential housing researcher Lennart Holm, the investigation estimated that to meet demands for higher-quality housing, a minimum of 1.5 million housing units needed to be constructed between 1960 and 1975. The previous standard of two rooms and a kitchen for a family of four, further, should be raised to three rooms and a kitchen. The investigation’s final report, *Höjd bostadsstandard* (Raised building standards), published in 1965, emphasized the role of rationalization and industrialization in tackling the increasing construction costs associated with higher spatial standards, and the report is often seen as the beginning of *Miljonprogrammet*, although this name was coined later. Following the report’s release, every year between 1965 and 1974, the Swedish Parliament granted loans for around 100,000 homes.⁴²

The state loans targeting the building of housing benefited large projects of over 1,000 units which used a single building system, encouraging rationalization and industrialization. This affected the structure and size of the organizations that executed the work. The rationalization of the building industry not only limited demand for construction workers in terms of skills and numbers but also created several large-scale building companies, which controlled and steered the market between them. Previously to the *Miljonprogram*, smaller developers had dominated. Typically, building sites brought together craftsmen with different skills who often traveled long distances and lived in temporary accommodation, constituting an unruly and unpredictable workforce. Equally important, although less noted, construction was typically seasonal work; with the new industrially produced building system, production could take place all year round, speeding up construction times and evening out demand for manual labor between seasons.⁴³

It has been suggested that it was not the number of housing units but the restructuring of the building sector that was the most significant and long-lasting effect of the *Miljonprogram*, a shift which continues to resonate within the structure of Swedish construction industry today. The program was part of the cementing of a financially driven housing policy and a building industry colored

- 44 See, for example, the argument developed in Helena Mattsson, "Where the Motorways Meet: Architecture and Corporatism in Sweden 1968" in *Architecture and the Welfare State*, ed. Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete, and Dirk van den Heuvel (London: Routledge, 2015), 155–75.
- 45 Under the main headline "DN synar Norrköping" [DN investigates Norrköping], we find three articles on page 23–24 together with statistics and images reporting on the building of Navestad by the journalists Mert Kubu and Reinhard Kruse: "Cirkelrund sovfabrik intressantast i Sverige," "Bostad i 'Harlem' väntar invandrare," and "Byggkungarna bestämmer i Norrköping," *Dagens Nyheter*, June 8, 1971.
- 46 Original quote in Swedish: "Den intressantaste stadsdelen i Sverige just nu är helt säkert Navestad i utkanten av Norrköping. Man kan tycka bra om de cirkelrunda husen som rymmer 5700 invånare. Man kan tycka illa om dem. Men likgiltigt blir man inte efter en promenad i gränderna mellan husen. Bland alla de fula dussinstadsdelar i fyrkantig betong som vuxit upp under de sena åren är onekligen Navestad ett försök till nytänkande." Mert Kubu, "Cirkelrund sovfabrik intressantast i Sverige," *Dagens Nyheter*, June 8, 1971.
- 47 Original quote in Swedish: "Norrköping hotar att få ett eget Harlem en stadsdel där de sociala problemen hopas. Omkring var tredje invånare i det ännu inte färdigbyggda Navestad är invandrare. Utredningar visar att 30 procent av befolkningen i den helt färdiga norra ringen är socialhjälpberoende. Det etablerade Norrköping rynkar på näsan åt den cirkelrunda förorten. Stadsdelen 'blev över' åt fattiga och åt invandrare." Reinhard Kruse, "Bostad i 'Harlem' väntar invandrare," *Dagens Nyheter*, June 8, 1971.

by corporatism and characterized by building monopolies.⁴⁴ The objective to rationalize the Swedish building industry, implemented through the building loan system—where the state stood for the financial risk, while the building industry stood for quick and effective delivery—was, however, highly successful in terms of the numbers of units produced: within less than ten years, the shortage of housing was turned into a surplus.

SLEEP FACTORY

In June 1971, the daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* returned to Norrköping to report on the progress of the Navestad housing project.⁴⁵ It dedicated an entire spread to the housing scheme. In contrast to the newspaper's 1968 article, a new critical stance against industrial building and large-scale mass housing can be discerned. *Dagens Nyheter's* initial overwhelming enthusiasm for the utopian housing scheme of Navestad was replaced by a suspicion of social failure, exploitation, and corruption. Under the double-edged headline "Cirkelrund sovfabrik intressantast i Sverige" (Circular sleep factory Sweden's most interesting), the journalist Mert Kubu, who often reported on housing issues under the mocking pseudonym *husbocken* (the old house borer), was clear in his judgment:

The most exciting district in Sweden right now is undoubtedly Navestad on the outskirts of Norrköping. One can like the circular houses, which accommodate 5,700 inhabitants. One can dislike them. But you won't be indifferent after walking between the houses in the alleys. Among all the ugly, boxy and boring concrete neighborhoods that have sprung up in recent years, Navestad is undeniably an attempt at innovation.⁴⁶

Although impressed by the architecture, Kubu expresses hesitation about the new mass-produced suburbs that tend to be, as the headline suggests, reduced to "sleep factories." However, the critique of Navestad does not stop there; the journalists suggest that the large mass housing project generates new "foreign" social problems unfamiliar to the Swedish welfare state. A more disturbing headline in the Norrköping spread foreshadowing later dominant narratives of segregation and racism: "Bostad i 'Harlem' väntar invandrare" (A home in "Harlem" awaits immigrants), which reported that:

Norrköping risks being given its own Harlem—a district where social problems will pile up. Around one in three inhabitants of the not-yet-finished Navestad is an immigrant. Investigations show that 30 percent of the population in the northern ring is dependent on social benefits. Norrköping's citizens frown at the circular suburb. The neighborhood is left behind for the poor and the immigrants.⁴⁷

Yet another headline hints at political corruption: "Byggkungarna bestämmer i Norrköping" (Constructions bosses run Norrköping). As an industrial working-class city where the Swedish Social Democrats had traditionally occupied a dominant position, Norrköping was often associated with strong class antagonisms. However, the

- 48 Original quote in Swedish: "Det är privatbyggarna, fastighetsmäklarna, HSB- och Riksbyggenpamparna som bestämmer hur stadsplaner skall se ut och hur marken skall fördelas i Norrköping. Märkligt nog har partierna placerat dem vid maktens köttgrytor i Norrköpings byggnadsnämnd och i fastighetsnämnden. Där behandlas ärenden enligt lag under största sekretess-skydd – för att "förebygga markspekulation." Mert Kubu and Reinhard Kruse, "DN synar Norrköping," *Dagens Nyheter*, June 8, 1971.
- 49 The DN articles suggest that it is the developers that steer the development of the city—as representatives on building and planning committees, developers get access to confidential information that they use to increase their profit. In the popular local narrative, this strong alliance between private developers and the municipality has been coined as "the spirit of Norrköping," see Mats Granberg, *Norrköpingsandan: Texter från Norrköpings Tidningar* [The spirit of Norrköping: Texts from Norrköpings Newspapers] (Norrköping: Norrköpings stadsbibliotek, 2012), 7–10.
- 50 Original quote in Swedish (italics by author): "Samhällets mål för bostads-försörjningen bör vara att hela befolkningen skall beredas sunda, rymliga, välplanerade och ändamålsenligt utrustade bostäder av god kvalitet till skäliga kostnader." Proposition 1967:100 angående riktlinjer för bostadspolitiken, cited in Hall, *Rekordåren: en epok i svenskt bostadsbyggande*, 30.

articles suggest another reality where the Social Democratic Party-controlled municipality collaborated with, or was even steered by, private capital and cooperations:

It is the private builders, the developers, the big bosses of HSB and Riksbyggen who decide how the town plans should look and how the land should be distributed in Norrköping. Oddly enough, the political parties have placed them all at the spoils of power (*maktens köttgrytor*) in Norrköping's building and urban planning committees. There, cases are handled according to the law under the greatest confidentiality—to "prevent land speculation."⁴⁸

Taken together, the articles associate the mass production of public housing not with welfare and well-being but with estrangement, exploitation, and corruption.⁴⁹

THE MARKET: RESTORATION AND INVESTMENT

The close alliance between the building industry and housing politics had made possible the provision of high-quality, affordable housing to the masses as outlined by the Social Democrats in 1967: "Society's housing provision should be to ensure that the *entire population* is offered healthy, spacious, well-planned, and suitably equipped homes of good quality at reasonable costs."⁵⁰

When the Millionprogram ended in 1974, there was more than enough affordable housing for all. However, this saturated housing market was now understood to affect the building industry and the labor market negatively. The housing politics of the Miljonprogram had produced a new generation of privately owned corporate construction companies, yet had removed the driving force that created them: the overproduction of housing removed the very market dynamic that these companies grew to fill. In a Fordist welfare state, characterized by a close alliance between industry and politics, between capital and state, surplus production was equally as problematic as empty shelves. Another housing issue emerged, not in terms of lack of provision but in terms of overproduction. From the point of view of municipalities around the country, vacancies and unwanted housing areas were becoming the new housing issue to engage in. *Allmännyttan*—both as a political concept and as a housing provider to the general public—was plunged into crisis.

FROM HOUSING SHORTAGE TO HOUSING SURPLUS

During the final construction phase of the second ring in Navestad, the housing situation in Norrköping had gone from one of acute shortage to that of surplus; a global recession was in the offing, and locally, the decline of the Swedish textile industry had caused Norrköping to slip in relative size and lose its status as an industrial city. In 1970, the last textile factory was shut down in the center, and the same year, as part of an ambitious regeneration of the town from a craft-based industry to a knowledge-based industry, a new university campus was established in the old industrial area



Navestad Housing Estate in Norrköping with the surrounding landscape of Vinsta forest, photographed by Joakim Kröger in 2000, just before the demolition and renovation of the estate started. The housing blocks closest in the image were lowered from eight to four floors.





As a research project, the architects Pär Eliaeson and Nilsson Samuelsson lived for three months in Navestad in 1998 to document the housing estate before the renovation began in 2000. The photograph shows the view from their apartment toward Vinsta forest.

Navestad housing estate with its green mature landscape and large trees. Photograph by Pär Eliaeson and Nilsson Samuelsson, 1998.

in the core of Norrköping. Now, the focus in the municipality went from building mass housing on the outskirts to regenerating Norrköping's city core.

After the extensive Navestad project, Norrköpings Hyresbostäder experienced financial problems and needed to be heavily subsidized by the municipality. In 1972, the concrete factory closed, and the private-public venture between Skånska Cementgjuteriet and Norrköpings Hyresbostäder ended. The housing associations' dire economic situation was partly a result of vacant flats in Navestad (the area was fully occupied only during a short period in the mid-1980s) but also partly caused by reduced building activity.⁵¹ Since its establishment in 1946, Norrköpings Hyresbostäder has dominated the real estate market in Norrköping, enjoying beneficial state loans for housing, financial assets, and turnover generated through building projects. With its factory closed and with hardly any new building activity, Norrköpings Hyresbostäder's income now primarily had to come from rent. As a regulator of the rental housing market and a non-profit housing company, Norrköpings Hyresbostäder had traditionally aimed to keep rents low; besides making it even harder to fill increasing vacancies, raising rents was a controversial option. In this pressed economic situation, the upkeep and maintenance of the Norrköpings Hyresbostäder housing was put on hold, and the new utopian housing schemes soon became shabby and worn.

THE REAL ESTATE MARKET AND PUBLIC HOUSING

In the 1980s, Stiftelsen Norrköpings Hyresbostäder was transformed from a non-profit association into a limited company (Hyresbostäder i Norrköping AB) to be run as an ordinary real estate company owned by the municipality. In contrast to commercial companies, however, and since it had previously been a non-profit housing association, Hyresbostäder i Norrköping AB had no liquid capital investments at its disposal. To commence operations and raise capital, it started to sell off extensive parts of its housing stock to private developers. The main focus within Hyresbostäder now was making their remaining tenement housing attractive in a housing market where both private and social landlords had vacancies. The slogan of Hyresbostäder shifted to *Konsumenten i centrum* (the consumer at the center) and in the new, competitive rental housing market, architectural transformations, and stylistic visual changes would become tools to generate interest and attraction in relation to a "hard-to-sell" product.⁵²

Hyresbostäder i Norrköping's transformation from a non-profit association to a profit-making real estate company was part of a larger systemic shift in Swedish economic politics that, in the end, would fundamentally alter the role of *allmännyttan* as society's main provider of affordable, high-standard housing for the general public. In 1992, a coalition government of Liberals and Social Democrats formulated a new overarching housing policy based on freedom of choice. A previous tax reform, popularly named *Århundredades skattereform* (the tax reform of a century) implemented in 1990–91, had lowered individual income tax to provide households more freedom to decide over their disposable income. The lost tax

- 53 Grander, *Allmännyttan och jämlikheten: Svensk bostadspolitik vid vägskäl?*, 64. See also: Bo Bengtsson, "Allmännyttan och bostadspolitiken i går, i dag, och i morgon – institutionella förutsättningar i förändring" [Public housing and housing policy yesterday, today, and tomorrow – changing institutional conditions], in *Nyttan med allmännyttan*, ed. Tapio Salonen (Stockholm: Liber 2015), 25–47.
- 54 See Martin Grander's definition of public housing and the regimes of housing: Martin Grander, "For the Benefit of Everyone? Explaining the Significance of Swedish Public Housing for Urban Housing Inequality" (PhD diss., Malmö University, 2018), <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:mau:diva-7437>.

revenue was partly financed with decreased state subsidies for public housing. For *allmännyttan*, the reform led to a 50 percent nominal rent increase over three years in the early 1990s.⁵³

In reality, the increase in housing costs for tenants caused a reduction in disposable income and, particularly amongst lower-income groups, less economic freedom rather than more. With raised rents, households with stable incomes opted for home ownership. With favorable tax reductions, owning your house was now an economically affordable and more economical option for an industrial worker than renting in *allmännyttan*. The mass housing estates of the Miljonprogram, which since the recession and the vacancies of the 1970s had acquired a bad reputation, were now the prevailing option for groups that, for different reasons, could not obtain a mortgage (the elderly, the young, the unemployed) or those that were not included in the welfare system (guest workers, immigrants, and refugees). Regardless of their architectural form and urban layout—large scale or low scale, high-rise or low-rise, individual dwellings or mass housing—the socioeconomic and racial segregation of the Miljonprogram housing areas was now fully in the making.

The most significant change to *allmännyttan* was the phasing out of state-subsidized loans, which removed the financial advantages and unique position that municipal housing associations had gained in 1945. With the same financing conditions as other players in the housing market, the associations' role in providing good, affordable housing for all was over, and with this, the general idea of affordable housing as part of welfare politics.⁵⁴

1995: STATE FUNDING FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN HOUSING: KRETSLOPPSMILJARDEN

It is, however, also crucial to note that although state housing subsidies were phased out, they were replaced by a new financial and political engagement in public housing. In the 1990s, as part of the *new economy*, state initiatives in public housing shifted from establishing grand national programs such as Miljonprogrammet based on universal principles of welfare to supporting local projects addressing particular problems in defined areas. As explained previously, the Swedish state had neither invested nor built public housing directly, but rather through an elaborate set of qualified and interest-controlled loans, it had steered investment in housing toward specific goals and numbers. Now, state funding for public housing was open to competitive bidding by municipalities, which in turn formed public-private partnership teams to develop business cases for the destination of state funds. To be able to bid successfully, you had to identify problems urgent enough to attract the funding. "Relevance" and "impact" became essential terms in this endeavor.

One of the larger state funds specifically targeting Miljonprogram areas was *Kretsloppsmiljarden* (The sustainability billion), established by the Social Democratic government in 1995. Although only 30 years had passed since the Miljonprogram was launched, areas built during the program were identified as urgently needing renovation. As part of an employment package directed toward the building industry, one billion SEK (Swedish kronor, equivalent 100

- 55 Propositionerna 1995/96:207 and 1995/96:222.
- 56 Kretsloppsmiljarden Propositionerna 1995/96:207 and 1995/96:222. See also Åsa Vifell, "Kretsloppsmiljarden och de lokala investeringsprogrammen. Framgång för miljön – nederlag för förvaltningsmodellen" [The Kretsloppsmiljarden and the local investment programs. Success for the environment—failure for the governance model], in *Processer i Regeringskansliet – sex fallstudier*, SCORE reports (Stockholm: SCORE, 2001), 51–78.
- 57 For the effect and evaluation of the Lokala investeringsprogrammet (Local Investment program) on the million program areas see: Sonja Vidén and Marina Botta, *Bostadsförnyelse och miljöåtgärder med stöd av lokala investeringsprogram: Hållbar utveckling i 50–60–70-talens bostadsområden* [Housing renewal and environmental measures with the support of local investment programs: Sustainable development in the residential areas of the 50s, 60s and 70s], final report for the FoU project "Hållbar utveckling i 50-, 60 och 70-talens bostadsområden – 'gröna' mål möter mark, hus och människor" (Stockholm: Arkitekturskolan KTH, 2006). See also Sonja Vidén, "Vård och förändring av hus och utemiljöer" [Care and alteration of buildings and outdoor environments], in *Rekordåren: en epok i svenskt bostadsbyggande*, ed. Thomas Hall (Karlskrona: Boverket, 1999), 133–94.
- 58 In 2025, Norrköping municipality and Norrköpings Hyresbostäder are planning to alter Navestad's community space and shopping areas; the latter is to be transformed into a recycling center that is open to the public and the former is to be moved into one of the housing rings, where, at a significant cost, housing was converted into offices in the 1990s (which today lies vacant).
- 59 For an informed discussion of the shift toward the bottom up and activation of local society in Swedish politics and urban theory, see Magnus Dahlstedt, "The Politics of Activation: Technologies of Mobilizing 'Multiethnic Suburbs' in Sweden," *Alternatives* 33, no. 4 (October, 2008): 481–504, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540803300405>.

million EUR) were allocated to adapting existing buildings' building practices in line with concepts of sustainability and renovation.⁵⁵ Grant applications for Kretsloppsmiljarden were intended to include educational and research-orientated aspects, as well as to support knowledge transfer between projects. However, these aspects were challenging to deliver, as the funds were also subject to competition between municipalities. Applying for funding was complex, as the definition of outcomes and results were vague and hard to decipher. Intriguingly, the government itself approved and evaluated applications for the Kretsloppsmiljarden, diverging from a long tradition in Sweden of delegating such decisions to expert groups or dedicated departments with concrete knowledge of the field.⁵⁶ Kretsloppsmiljarden, as a state initiative to invest in and support mass housing, stood in stark contrast to both Bostads-sociala utredningen and Miljonprogrammet with their strong focus on scientific expertise and universal application. Now, the knowledge and expertise should grow from an area's local and specific needs and problems. In 1998, the ambitions of the Kretsloppsmiljarden were broadened in the "Lokal investeringsprogrammen" (local investment programs). The programs now included a total of 7.2 billion SEK (700 million EUR) and would have a fundamental impact on steering the transformation and rebuilding of the Miljonprogram-era housing area through economic incentives supporting local private-public partnerships.⁵⁷

RESTORING THE WELFARE STATE: FROM MILLION PROGRAM TO BILLION PROJECT

Change is an integral part of Navestad's material history, from the completion of the first housing ring in the 1970s to the renovation project that took place in the first decades of the new millennium and through to today (2025), the housing estate has been characterized by the continuous transformation of its built structures.⁵⁸ From its inauguration in 1972, several more or less long-lived initiatives, led by various combinations of public actors and local interest groups, worked to alter the negative image of the estate to make it more attractive, initially at a relatively modest scale. Participatory projects, primarily involving tenants living on the estate, aimed to stimulate social interactions between new and old tenants. Norrköpings Hyresbostäder supported a local newspaper combining user information and news stories about the estate.⁵⁹ This was followed by a series of alterations of the apartment layouts, to make larger units into smaller ones in order to attract students, and single households. These minor, often bottom-up alterations, driven by local forces, had an effect: in the mid-1980s, the estate was fully occupied for the first time. However, in 1987, funded by a dedicated state grant toward renovation and rebuilding, a more extensive restoration of the common areas was initiated. The open public spaces of the inner courtyards and the surrounding landscape were subdivided to create private front gardens, and individual allotment gardens in the surrounding fields were made available. In the same spirit, the housing block's exposed ornamented concrete panels were painted over in different pastel colors, dividing the circular housing areas into "slices of cake," where each wedge

- 60 At the end of the Balkan war, the estate Navestad was temporarily turned into a refugee camp, with displaced people being housed in the vacant apartments. Many of the refugees found a permanent home in the estate which facilitated integration into the Swedish society. For an account of rebuilding and alterations prior to *Nya Navestad* see Sandell, ed., *Hyresbostäder 1946–1996*, 77–96. For the planning process leading to *Nya Navestad* see Katja Ketola, “I mötet mellan projekt och process: om samverkan och tillit i förnyelse av ett bostadsområde” [The meeting between the project and the process] (Lic.diss., Chalmers tekniska högskola, 2000).
- 61 Granberg, *Norrköpingsandan: Texter från Norrköpings Tidningar*, 7–10.
- 62 See the argument on governmentality, sustainability, and participatorial processes when establishing the *turn-around* project of Navestad 1998 in Sophia Lövgren, “Att skapa ett framtidens folk: governmentality och miljödiskurs i modern svensk bostadspolitik: miljöprogramområdet Navestad” [To create the future people: Governmentality and environmental discourse in modern Swedish housing policy: the suburban area of Navestad] (PhD diss., Linköpings universitet, 2002). See also Åsa Bråmås, *Går det att vända utvecklingen i utsatta bostadsområden?: exemplet Navestad/Ringdansen i Norrköping* [Is it possible to reverse the trend in vulnerable residential areas? The example of Navestad/Ringdansen in Norrköping], CSK report (Centrum för kommunstrategiska studier, Linköpings universitet, 2011).

was allocated a dedicated housing steward. The individual housing units were also changed at this time, but now with a focus on creating larger apartments with the argument that a better mixture between small and more significant flats could provide more variation and attract new tenants. Another project aimed toward diversification was a larger investment to rebuild part of the unrented housing blocks into offices for state institutions to introduce workplaces in the area. However, these more substantial changes did not increase interest in moving into the estate, and the number of vacant apartments began to rise. The municipal reorganization in the early 1990s, based on a purchaser-provider model with a competitive situation between different municipality units, made collaborations and local initiatives harder to coordinate, and toward the 1990s, local engagement in Navestad started to fade out, and many initiatives and collaborations ended.⁶⁰

With an increasing number of vacant flats, the need for a more comprehensive approach to the problems faced by Navestad was identified by Norrköping municipality, and in the mid-1990s, under the name *Nya Navestad* (New Navestad), an ambitious “turn-around” project was launched with the objective to raise state and private funding.⁶¹ Under the banner of sustainability, *Nya Navestad* was to finally and conclusively transform the estate’s architecture through partial demolition and configuration.⁶² The overall aim was to lower the scale of the building and open up the estate to the surrounding areas. In the original scheme, building heights varied between eight and three stories to maximize the sunlight access for apartments and create variations and a play of shadows on the façade. The highest blocks were oriented toward the motorway and the north, while the lower blocks were oriented south to allow views of the open landscape and the Vinsta forest and recreation area. Ahlin’s and Jones’ formal composition was driven by the idea of creating rhythm by way of differences between open and closed spaces; the alleys leading into the central courtyard from the exterior were deliberately narrow and intimate to emphasize the large open spaces within.

Intending to scale down the estate, the *Nya Navestad* project transformed the site-specific and ecological values (the maximizing of sunlight) of the Navestad project. By cutting down the high-rise, eight-story apartment blocks that aligned the higher blocks with the lower ones, a more uniform layout was created. Similarly, the housing rings were divided into smaller housing blocks. This radical and expensive alteration cut them in half to make more prominent entrance points into the protected inner space. This resulted in a more substantial visual presence of the motorway and changed the acoustic environment; the aim of excluding traffic noise in the inner courtyards was undermined, as was the original compositional idea of the architect of creating a closed shared neighborhood space in the inner rings.

This shift between variation and repetition was also altered regarding the individual housing units. The original layout and distribution of the 1972 project aimed to equalize quality among individual units. All flats had double-aspect views, sunlight, and balconies. The *Nya Navestad* project, on the other hand, strove to create variation through difference. An added pitched roof and rooftop apartments, clad with wood and with generous private



In 2003, the balcony façade was replaced with a glass-fronted design and external rainwater pipes replaced the fluted pilasters ornament. Photographed by John Håkansson in 2023.

The scaled-down Nya Navestad, with its lower housing block in orange and a single sculpture fragment previously belonging to Einar Höste's large-scale sculpture *Skålforn* was photographed by John Håkansson in 2023.





Navestad's original ornamental concrete panels and balcony fronts were replaced in 2003 with a smooth plaster façade in various colors. Photographed by John Håkansson in 2023.

- 63 Vidén and Botta, *Bostadsförnyelse och miljöatgärder med stöd av lokala investeringsprogram*, 77–81.
- 64 Kjell Löfberg and Henrik Witt, "Miljard lyfter miljonförort," *Dagens Nyheter*, Oktober 19, 2003.

terraces, introduced an unfamiliar hierarchy between the existing housing units. Now, some flats were more exclusive than others. Yet overall, the changes introduced made the housing area more uniform, and anonymous. The sculptural expression of the façade was toned down; the triangular-shaped concrete balcony fronts, with their ornamented half-moon pattern designed by Arne Jones, were exchanged for transparent off-the-shelf glass.

The recladding of the façade to add insulation covered the exposed concrete panels and the different textures and grains of their ornamented surfaces. Altogether, these alterations exchanged the sculptural concrete panel expression and rich large-scale ornamentation for a smooth, undecorated plaster façade in various pastel colors—pink and warm yellow. In one way, this referred stylistically back to the early history of social housing from the 1920s, the minimal ornamentation of which had signaled simplicity and economy of means in contrast to the heavy façade ornamentation of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the new, smoothly rendered façade aesthetics, in combination with transparent glass balconies, related Navestad to contemporary commercial housing from the 1990s. The estate looked more ordinary and newer, although it was still large and repetitive.

This lengthy and total makeover was completed in 2003 at the impressive cost of one billion Swedish kronor (100 million EUR), quadrupling the original construction cost of 250 million Swedish kronor. The Nya Navestad project received 260 million in direct governmental grants from Kretsloppsmiljarden, and a consortium of private developers, and the municipality stood for the rest.⁶³ In the local press, Navestad was nicknamed "the Billion Program."⁶⁴ In this state-sponsored rebuilding, the initial 2,000 housing units were reduced to around 1,000, partly by combining smaller flats into bigger ones but mainly through demolition. When the Swedish State, for the first time, invested directly in public mass housing at this scale, it was not to provide more housing but to provide *less*.

THE RUIN: THE LEGACY OF A MODEL

In all its complexity, Navestad illustrates the history of housing the masses in Sweden. The conception, materialization, and dematerialization of its monumental structures reveals the potency of the intersection between architecture, politics, and finance in the Swedish welfare model—and how it has changed. The 1945 *Bostadsociala utredningen* had argued for the establishment of non-profit municipality-driven housing associations with the argument that the market, in the end, could not produce enough affordable housing in time. The market was driven by demand, and only a lack of housing generated the incentive to start building. Therefore, the market was always "late," and as Ahlin argued in his 1945 article on the housing question, this delay hindered a working, modern industrial society.

When Navestad was completed in 1972, Ahlin was interviewed by the left-wing tabloid paper *Aftonbladet* regarding the philosophy and future of public housing. His response emphasized the need for community and well-being when building housing, and he argued strongly for variation, good services, and shared spaces,

- 65 Original quote in Swedish: "Ser man mera allmänt på framtidens bostad så tror jag att människornas bindning till en viss bostad blir svagare. Det hänger blanda samman med de stora förändringarna inom arbetslivet med arbets- och yrkesbyten flera gånger under en människas yrkesliv. Arbetsmarknaden blir mera rörlig också rent geografiskt. I ett sådant samhälle blir det inte så praktiskt eller självklart att binda sig vid en självägd bostad. I stället för ägande bryter ett hyrestänkande igenom. Vi får en 'hyresrevolution' som på ett drastiskt sätt ändrar förhållandet mellan människor och föremål." Eric Ahlin quoted in Ragnar Amrén, "Arkitekten, hur ska vi bo i framtiden?," *Aftonbladet*, February 20, 1972.
- 66 See SOU (1935:2) *Bostadssociala utredningen* (Stockholm: Socialdepartementet, 1935) and Eva Rudberg, *Uno Åhrén: en föregångsman inom 1900-talets arkitektur och samhällsplanering* (Stockholm: Statens råd för byggnadsforskning, 1981).
- 67 Gunnar Asplund et al., *acceptera* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1931), 2.

all of which had been central to Ahlin in the planning of Navestad. However, when asked about the future of public housing, Ahlin interestingly argued that the notion of a permanent home of one's own might soon be outdated:

If you look more generally at the living environment of the future, I think that people's attachment to a particular home will become weaker. This has to do with people changing jobs and occupations several times during their working life. The labor market is becoming more mobile geographically. In such a society it will not be so practical or self-evident to commit to a self-owned home. Instead of ownership, a rental mindset breaks through. We are witnessing a "rental revolution" that drastically changes the relationship between people and objects.⁶⁵

Ahlin echoes the rhetorics advanced by the radical architects who initiated *Bostadssociala utredningen* in the first place in the 1930s.⁶⁶ In the model for housing the masses put forward in the housing investigation, the home was imagined not as an investment object floating on a speculative market, nor as a place of belonging and permanence, but rather as one of convenience and service: a neutral background to a life lived. Access to a healthy, affordable home was like free health services, education, and social security, one of several keys to a modern welfare society of independent, equal individuals.

The opening iconic image of the Swedish architectural manifesto of 1931 *acceptera*, titled "Individen och massan" (The Individual and the Mass) summarizes this utopian dream of an architecture that is not about individual expression or class identification or difference but about being of use, of *allmännytt*a ("useful to all").⁶⁷ A well-planned architecture that, in its functionality and reticent beauty, would work for everyone—rich or poor, young or old. Yet, looking in the rearview mirror, this ideological and radical objective of freeing the home from vested desires and speculation was short-lived. In the neoliberal reality of Sweden today, public housing is part of the economic toolbox of municipalities. Housing, as well as other welfare buildings such as schools and libraries, are part of a real estate game wherein property is bought and sold in line with the directives of the municipality's yearly budget. Indeed, housing is no longer an infrastructure supporting industrialization but, in itself, an industry driving a market.

Yet the sturdy remnants of the political idea of architecture as welfare are still with us. If the political model for housing is lost, its material manifestations still work hard and—despite their worn surfaces—still serve us. The impressive and monumental circular housing ring of Navestad and its adjacent low-rise carpet of terraced housing still constitute a durable, even magnificent, welfare architecture heritage. It still provides homes of a good standard to thousands of Norrköping's citizens from far and near. Under the peeling, light pastel-colored façade of the 1990s renovation, giant fluted pilasters worthy of a palace of another era may once again be rediscovered. To great wonder, in the alleys between the rings, a sculpture park of cosmic dimensions may one day be unearthed, and with it, the question of how a previous society could afford such investments in public art and architecture.



Individen och massan . . .

Det personliga eller det allmängiltiga?

Kvalitet eller kvantitet?

— en olöslig frågeställning, ty vi kan icke komma ifrån kollektivitetens faktum lika litet som vi kan komma ifrån individens fordran på självständigt liv.

Problemet heter i våra dagar:

kvantitet *och* kvalitet, massa *och* individ.

Det är nödvändigt att söka lösa det även i byggnads-konsten och konstindustrin.

"The Individual and the Masses." Cover image of the Swedish modernist manifesto *acceptera* from 1931 written by Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius, Greger Paulsson, Eskild Sundahl, and Uno Ahren as a response to the critique of the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition and its modern architecture.

