Displacement

The densification process occurs in low density residential areas where property speculation is still not strong. The backyards of single houses have a releveant interest.

1. Empowerment

The housing reconvertion actives synergies between the landlord and the student and between the landlord and the municipality, which must release fast and feasable permits.

2. Injection

The garage is made habitable through the inclusion of a cell.

3. Synergies

The presence of students drives new synergies and it leads to the opportunity of a hybrid community.

Contrariwise Urbanism Toward Affordable Student Housing
Backyards garage lives
Contrariwise Urbanism Toward Affordable Student Housing

Veronica Gerini

Master’s Programme “Laboratory of Immediate architectural Intervention” LiAI

Umeå School of Architecture
Umeå University

UMA Examiners:
Oren Lieberman
Alberto Altés Arlandis

External Examiner:
Hélène Frichot

Supervisors:
Oren Lieberman
Alberto Altés Arlandis
Josep Garriga
Abstract

Sweden and its higher education system
Attractiveness
Student immigration
Study-scape of Sweden

The displacement of Umeå university

Umeå Capital of Culture’s syndrome
Culture driven growth
Who is invited in the development?

Foreign students as actors of urban life
Students shape the city
The problem of student housing
Mapping diversification
Ålidhem centrum

Landscape of actions
Talks
Housing garage

Towards an affordable real estate market
Garaging of foreign students
Why garaging?

A Contrariwise Urbanism

Reflection

Bibliography
In the last decade we have witnessed the strengthening of an international network of higher education all over the world. The need to educate and develop our contemporary society is a machine in continuous work and progress. Being a student is a condition that makes individuals, enriches culture and often crosses boundaries. Students are a necessary piece in the capitalist economy, which makes them a valuable and essential resource in order to sustain its markets. Therefore, countries and institutions compete to hold more and more students within their society but what are the consequences of the internationalisation of higher education (and its market(s)) that is taking place on a global scale?

The globalisation and internationalisation of education promote a migration of students always on the rise. In some cities such as Umeå, it implies consequent urban growth, the need to develop facilities, services and accommodations. Such patterns of immigration make students actors in the real estate market of the country they move to but they do not always find adequate conditions for their integration.

The current economic crisis has debilitated many markets including that of real estate, and in that context, the thesis explores alternative ways of approaching affordable accommodation for students, as well as a different understanding of urban planning that aims at enabling diverse coexistences of students and other inhabitants and the progressive transformation and hybridization of otherwise very homogenous areas of the city.
Sweden and its higher education system
Attractiveness

Generally Sweden is seen as promised land where many things are possible and where everyone silently aims for a better future. How could we not trust a country able to face the global crisis better than the rest of Europe, a country that gave birth to many famous companies and skilled industries (Volvo, Saab, Nokia, Ikea and so on). Sweden is even a country where social equality appeared before than in many more others, where feminism is widely spread, where social classes seem not exist and gay union is legal.

“If you had to be reborn anywhere in the world as a person with average talents and income, you would want to be a Viking”¹

It is undeniable that Sweden leans forward for development and success. This targeted attention to reach only the best is visible even in the chase for foreign students within its Higher Education System.

In the last decade, Sweden attracted an always increasing number of foreign students within its borders. This immigration has become a relevant issue and consequently it has involved the Government and the Minister of Education and a new legislation between Migrationsverket and Swedish Higher Education System (HSE). In 1996, Sweden took part in the Schengen agreement, which allows for free movement of people across all Member States. Therefore, European citizens have always been able to access the education system in Scandinavia. The situation is not the same if we consider students from countries outside the European territory. For many foreign students Swedish Higher Education system means

Costs of Higher Education

Report by Neil Brazil
“USA among World’s Top Three Most Expensive Destinations for International Students”
(13 August 2013)
progress and advanced research, it also mean a higher level of education in respect to the one they could get in their home country with a wider range of future job possibilities. So making its education completely free Sweden has been capable of competing in the global higher education market.

In the period that goes from 2000 to 2010 Sweden has been protagonist of an exponential increase of new arrival students for graduate and post-graduate study. Partially the effect derives from the image and the condition of stability that the country has always enjoyed. Moreover, this condition has been possible because of the free education and foreign students were not asked to pay any fee to get accepted in the Swedish education. This was until 2010 when Swedish Government introduced a new policy for Third country students\(^2\) intended to study here. Starting from the autumn semester 2010-2011 every international student was required to pay a tuition fee of approximately 110,000 sek to study in Sweden and it is not hard to believe that such decision caused a decrease of applications of 79%. So why did the Swedish Government introduce a tuition fee for international students?

Referring to the official reports, it comes to our knowledge that the main purpose has been to improve the educational standards in the country.

“It's satisfactory that so many fewer (students) applied, this was exactly the effect we wanted. A large proportion of the applicants that had strained the system is now gone.”\(^3\)

However, if compared to a global scale, studying in Sweden seems to be cheaper than other countries like Australia, USA and England but in Europe remains one of the most expensive and sought.
There are many reasons to increase recruiting of foreign students to Swedish universities and higher education institutions. They are a resource for the development and quality of teaching and research environments, as they can contribute with new perspectives. They can also contribute to strengthening the international environment and diversity, promoting understanding of other cultures and traditions, whilst proving invaluable for the development of the economy. At the same time they form a recruitment base for continued education, research and employment in Sweden. Students with experience of Swedish education, culture and society can also be good ambassadors for Sweden. They can form an important resource for the depth and breadth of cooperation between Sweden and other countries, not least within trade and industry. Amongst other things, it is important that foreign students are offered classes in Swedish.

Government Bill 2004/05:162
In 2011 with the introduction of tuition fee in Higher Education, Sweden government got 2'089'100'000 kr
The fees are meant to focus on quality as the main attraction of studying in Sweden, rather than it being free.

“Swedish universities are not allowed to store information about the students’ nationality. Sweden Statistics and Swedish Higher Education Authority try to estimate this once in a while.”

Henrik Stenwall
IT-Manager, Umeå University

Immigration of international students

Student immigration

The phenomena of immigration within the country’s borders mentioned here for the purpose of this research analyses only a small percentage of people arriving in the country, in fact students. During 2013 the Migrationsverket has counted 108,000 new residence permits: 37% of them were asked for asylum seekers, 29% for relatives of refugees, 18% working permits and the 7% has been required by foreign students. Therefore, it is fair to mention that students immigration’s phenomenon is only one piece of a larger scale and this issue would require further more explanation. Swedish government is constantly redefining permissions and reforms.

In this broader overview, the decision of introduce tuition fees for Third country students seem to become more clear when we read another report drafted by Migrationverket, which turned out during the years of greatest inflow, a fraudulent trend. In fact, during the years of greatest inflow, a fraudulent trend has been discovered. Many foreign students who obtained a visa to study in the country did never officially attend the university taking advantage only of the visa to enter Sweden. So there is probably an intent of controlling those movements within the country and fees allow to better keep track of a bigger issue.

“""
Notes
2. The terminology “Third countries students” refers to Report from EMN Sweden 2012:1, Immigration of International Students to Sweden. “The central term ‘international student’ as defined in the context of EU migration policy is as follows(...). This group shall be known as “third-country students”. Synonyms also used in this study include the terms “international students” or “visiting students”.
3. State Secretary Peter Honeth, 2012
01 | **Universities in Sweden**
Inequality of distribution

In Sweden, overall responsibility for higher education and research rests with the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) and the Government. They decide on the regulations that apply to the higher-education area. They also determine objectives, guidelines and the allocation of resources for the area. There are 14 public-sector universities and 20 public-sector university colleges in Sweden. The operations of HEIs are regulated by the laws and statutes that apply to the area of higher education. Higher education in Sweden is governed by the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance.

02 | **Number of students**
Attractiveness

The number of students enrolled is defined for every academic year by the Swedish higher education. It is not hard to notice that bigger scale city are hosting wide part of the students in their several higher institutions. The number of university present on the territory is not the only factor influencing the distribution but the possibility to live in a bigger city, with more facilities, accommodations and connections plays a big role. The displacement of universities drastically changes heading to the north and getting closer to the hinterland of the country.
03 | Incoming students
Ensure diversification

From the autumn of 2011 and onwards applicants from countries outside the EU/EEA and Switzerland who are not participating in exchange programmes have to pay both an application fee when they apply and then tuition fees before they may start their studies. For the autumn semester of 2011 the number of international applicants received in the regular admissions round declined considerably (by 64 per cent) to 5,000, but for the autumn semester of 2012 there was a rise to 6,500, which is still fewer than before the introduction of fees.

04 | Shortage of accommodations

The housing situation for students differs between university and college towns. This year, assesses 20 of 43 university communities that there is lack of adequate housing for students, which is the same number of municipalities 2010-2012. The task shows how many municipalities reporting shortages and does not say anything about how many students are affected or how big the shortage is. It is also important to note that the number of students differs between the various university municipalities.
The introduction of fee doesn’t stop incoming students

The number of incoming students who were HE entrants in first and second-cycle programmes during the academic year of 2011/12 was 20,800 which is a decline of 8,600 compared to the previous year. The proportion of all HE entrants at Swedish HEIs coming from abroad was 23 per cent. This can be compared with the previous year, when this figure was 28 per cent. Despite the decline, this is a large proportion compared to the academic year of 2002/03, when students from abroad accounted for 15 per cent all HE entrants. Just over 70 per cent of the new incoming students during the academic year of 2011/12 were exchange students. During the academic year of 2011/12 the rising trend in the number of students arriving in Sweden to study in first and second-cycle programmes reversed. After having increased threefold during the preceding decade, the number declined by almost 30 per cent compared to the previous year. During the academic year just over 38,100 foreign students were studying at HEIs in Sweden, which is 8,700 fewer than the year before. These figures include all the incoming students registered in Sweden and not only new entrants to higher education.

International mobility in Sweden

During the academic year of 2011/12 the rising trend in the number of students arriving in Sweden to study in first and second-cycle programmes reversed. After having increased threefold during the preceding decade, the number declined by almost 30 per cent compared to the previous year. During the academic year just over 38,100 foreign students were studying at HEIs in Sweden, which is 8,700 fewer than the year before.
Percent of free movers and exchange students in Sweden in 2012

Number of HE entrants, students who have not previously participated in higher education in Sweden, 2001/02-2011/12

Source: Higher education in Sweden, 2013 Status report
The displacement of Umeå University

02
Umeå university was founded in 1965 and is Sweden’s fifth oldest university. It has a strong international and multicultural presence with students, teachers and researchers from all over the world. From a national point of view, the university has found fertile ground for its development due to its location and has become a reference point for the surrounding regions. Because of this Umeå has been established as university city and nowadays its population is composed for third of its population are students. The university benefits from growth in size and scale as well as the arrival of new personalities and specialists. The presence of Swedish students has always been growing and Umeå university is one of the largest universities in the country.

Today Umeå University is the pivot university for the North of the country but it strives towards becoming one of Scandinavia’s best environments for study and research. According to the Internationalisation process of Swedish Higher Education then, Umeå University committed its governmental funds to elaborate new learning programmes taught in English, to hire English speaking staff members and to improve its commercialisation in order to broadcast itself in other countries (fairs, English website, banners). As a result, the university is now mentioned in worldwide rankings and it is actually attracting people to come to study in Sweden as one of the fifty youngest universities in the world.

“The foreign students who come to Umeå University along very well, which is a good score in the survey the International Student Barometer (ISB) shows. In the 2011 ISB was ranked Umeå University as number one in Sweden and five in Europe. The students value most include course content, social activities, opportunities for sport and leisure, receiving, housing, student counseling and other student financial aid.”

The machine of the university not only based its incomes on governmental authorities (Swedish
Research Council, FAS) but it is even widely supported by European Union and Swedish companies. Looking at some data, during the period 2008-2012 the university received research funding for 259 million krone. In 2012, subsidies increased by 100 million krone (up 13 percent), after declining in 2011.

The increase consists primarily of EU grants (an increase by 27 million or 37 percent); Swedish companies (an increase of 20 million or 220 percent), FORMAS (an increase of 17 million crowns or 41 percent) and other government authorities (an increase of 15 million or 18 percent).

Even though there has been a decrease of application in 2011, the economic crisis, the cut of governmental fundings Umeå university still receives many applications. Because of such a boom of enrollments, the city of Umeå faces now a lack of housing because of its fast its growth in population is not matched by a similar growth in the production of housing and real state solutions. It is therefore which is not as fast as its real estate productions. It is therefore, it is not easy to find accommodations for new incoming individuals even though they might rely on the student housing office at the campus. Moreover, Akademiska Hus, the governmental company which manages and owns the real estates of higher education in Sweden states that:

“We are very much aware of the problematic student housing situation in Umeå, Luleå, Uppsala, Stockholm, and so forth. This is a big issue for us, but the government made clear for us that it is not in our mission to build and own student housing. Therefore we work very hard to identify areas of land that we could sell to other companies that are in the business of student housing.”

Which are the consequences of such a business? Meanwhile, Umeå Kommun doesn’t invest any free or retrofitting properties for this purpose. Both municipality and university act within the big Welfare State machine that at the moment has less resources because of the cri-
At present there is no special residence permit for Third-country nationals who have completed their studies and wish to remain in Sweden to seek employment.

Avgiftsreformen, lärosätenas första erfarenheter. Rapport 2011

Number of free movers - Third countries students 2011
During the sixties, Umeå Kommun received a big push from the Government and Ålidhem centrum was built in order to face the great injection of new incoming student in the city.

“The group of young people aged 19-24 represents almost half move to Umeå. It is because Umeå is a university. The group has been extremely relevant in recent years as demographic factor and it reaches ways maximum 2013 and then it decreased. It is big challenge for Umeå to meet the competition for this group against other major universities. An important factor here is the availability of housing for young people and students”

The Municipality is openly aware of the current need and demand for affordable housing for incoming students but how is it responding to such a call? **What is the attitude of the Municipality towards an urban improvement?**

I think we are heading to the risk of marginalisation of State’s institutions. If the municipality and the government are not responding to this lack, it means that students are abandoned in the real estate market bubble and they will turn into a weak band within the system.

The reality of a foreign student moving abroad is unique and fragile. We should understand the precariousness of them, they come to Sweden for the sake of their education and most of the time they don’t have an ensured income to live on. Most of foreign students are temporary presences in the country, they settle a transitional community.

The realisation of students accommodations aim to ward this band of contemporary society providing them cheap and ensure an accommodation. So it’s necessary to question which mechanism fails if the State doesn’t supply this need anymore.

Notes
1. Umeå Universitet Årsredovisning 2012 - p.57
2. David Carlsson, Regiondirektör Akademiska Hus
3. Umeå Kommun, “Planering för 200 000 invånare”
Umeå University campus

Departments:
- The Humanities Building
- The Behavioural Sciences Building
- The Biology Building
- The KBC Building (Chemical Biology)
- The Chemistry Building
- The Natural Sciences Building
- The Northern Behavioural Sciences
- The NTK’s Student Union Building
- The Physics Building
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Forestry
- The Physiology Building
- The Psychotherapy Training Clinic
- The Social Sciences Building
- The MIT Building
- SLU’s Students Union
- The Teacher Education Building
- The Technology Building
- The Behavioural Sciences Building Unions
- The Northern Behavioural Sciences

Facilities:
- The University Administration
- Akademiska hus (Building Administrators)
- Universum (restaurants)
- Aula Nordica (Conference & Concert Hall)
- University Library
- Iksu University Sports Centre

Art campus

Departments:
- Umeå School of Architecture
- Umeå Institute of Design
- Umeå Academy of Fine Arts

Facilities:
- University Library
- Bildmuseet museum
- Humlab-X

Skellefteå campus

Departments:
- Arenan, hörsal
- C206, videokonferens
- Campushallen
- Datasalar
- Dialogen videokonferens/mötesrum
- Forum, hörsal
- Hoppet
- Startgropen
- Studenthuset Stock
- Studion, videokonferens

Örnsköldsvik campus

Departments:
- University Library
- Learning Centre (Lärocentrum)
- Study Plus
- Mid Sweden University
- Student Union, Student Housing
- Swedbank Arena

Train station

Foreign students in Umeå University

Starting from the autumn semester 2010-11 every international student has been required to pay a tuition fee of approximately 11,000 sek to study in Sweden and this new policy caused a decrease of applications of 79% within the country.

Free movers: Third country students in 2012
The Umeå Capital of Culture’s syndrome
Opening event of Umeå Capital of Culture 2014
Promoting a new Capital of culture manifests a blurred aspect, it is showing off a city that doesn’t reflect the city’s own nature at all. We are living a iridescent spectacularization of our urban environment without understanding what those changes are really making. It is a forced mutation that cuts out its own citizens. The branding of the city of Umeå appears now as an irresistible process and the way to deal with it is to become aware and intervene in those proceedings that look unreachable for the will of the individual. Within wide urban development and gentrification, one should rather watching at existing realities in order to promote better conditions and habitability of the city. The reactions to such a rush for fame are not missing, in the city there are groups and movements against big constructions yards, privatisation and all those choices that are making the city as a capital.

The expansion of the city was and still is the main concern for Umeå municipality but it address better resources and spaces only for a wealthy growing population. It is known the plan to build residential housing for future population of the city, an expansion which includes the doubling of the latter and an increase of the market’s speculation.

The current situation in the housing market, the branding of commercial spaces, the standardisation of living facilities and the construction by private companies targeted only at fast capital growth are all factors that hinder and obscure the possible integration of the students community within of the existing urban fabric.
Who is invited in the city’s growth?

Despite the strong urban growth, however, the offer of accommodation is unable to meet the demands the population poses, not only from students but also by ordinary citizens. In order to understand how it has come to the current situation, it has to be known that all Swedish municipalities include a system of housing subsidized by the government. In Umeå AB Bostaden is responsible for managing the lease state-owned housing in the urban areas. The company is the most influential real estate agency but the average waiting time for a dwelling is 6 years. Hence the huge need of housing and infrastructures in Umeå leaves ample opportunities for private construction companies such as PEAB, Skanska, HSB, NCC, Riksbyggen, AB Bostaden, Vännäsbyggarna, Tyrens, Standard and others to play an important role in the current real estate market.

This situation has been partially simplified by the Ministry of Housing by reducing permits and increasing the opportunity for such companies to act freely. But if such a manoeuvre should allow the increase of housing construction, how come this does not occur? How comes it happen that in a market driven housing sector, building is still really slow?
The real estate market developers in the city

1. Developer: Tyréns AB  
   Area: Kotten 1

2. Constructor: Standard i Umeå AB  
   Area: Kotten 1

3. Constructor: Skanska  
   Architect: 2BK Arkitekter AB  
   Area: Barken 1

4. Developer: HSB  
   Architect: Sweco  
   Area: Veden 1

5. Developer: Riksbyggen  
   Architect: Sweco  
   Area: Sändakern

6. Constructor: NCC  
   Area: Sändakern

7. Developer: Vännäsbyggarna  
   Area: Hackan 4

8. Developer: Vännäsbyggarna  
   Area: Hackan 4

9. Developer: Riksbyggen  
   Area: Arken

10. Developer: Balticgruppen  
    Architect: White  
    Constructor: Tyrens AB  
    Area: Rådtorget

11. Developer: AB Bostaden  
    Area: Mården

12. Developer: AB Bostaden  
    Architect: White arkitekter, Arkinova  
    Constructor: NCC  
    Area: Öbackasågen 2

13. Developer: Akademiskahus  
    Architect: White arkitekter  
    Area: Liljansberget

14. Constructor: Riksbyggen  
    Area: Mariestrand 4

15. Constructor: PEAB  
    Area: Sjörået 1

16. Constructor: Skanska  
    Area: Gimonäs 3
Retrofitting area
Expansion areas in Umeå municipality
2013-2020
Buildings construction market: who is invited?
Hence the huge need of housing and infrastructures in Umeå leaves ample opportunities for private construction companies such as PEAB, Skanska, HSB, NCC, Riksbyggen, AB Bostaden, Vännäsbyggarna, Tyrens, Standard to play an important role if not basic in the current real estate market.

This situation has been partially simplified by the Ministry of Housing by reducing permits and increasing the opportunity for such companies to act freely. But if such a manoeuvre should allow the increase of housing construction

Municipality
(10 apartments)

Private individual landlord
(10 apartments)

Construction companies
(10 apartments)

The real estate developers in the city

“We are very much aware of the problematic student housing situation in Umeå, Luleå, Uppsala, Stockholm, and so forth. This is a big issue for us, but the government made clear for us that it is not in our mission to build and own student housing. Therefore we work very hard to identify areas of land that we could sell to other companies that are in the business of student housing.”

David Carlsson
Regiondirektör of Akademiska Hus

Developer: Private
Area: Rothofsvägen 12
Dismantle of the old building in the backyard in order to build 8 new independent apartments.

Average of price per sqm (the average compared 45sqm flats)

Main public facilities in the city (shopping malls, restaurants, cinemas, theatre

51,8% 43,1%

supplementary buildings
residential buildings
2,1% buildings public service

Buildings type in Umeå
1,8% industrial buildings
1% business buildings

Density of population in Umeå municipality
50-999 inhabitants/km2
1000-1999 inhabitants/km2
2000-3999 inhabitants/km2
4000-5999 inhabitants/km2
>6000 inhabitants/km2

Umeå city-growing
The expansion of the city was and still is the main concern for Umeå municipality and the desire to address better resources and spaces for an ever growing population.
...it would be nice to rent an apartment together!
“In Sweden they are building 22,000 houses per year and it is expected to have 50,000 and companies have all the possibilities to operate freely. But if you have the possibility to sell for 75,000 sek/sqm something that cost you 25,000 sek/sqm, will you build so much to increase the competitions and consequently let the prices go down? The constructors are building slower and slower in order to raise up the prices on the market” 1

Companies are building really slow to raise the demand between the tenants and increase their own profits largely. In this atmosphere of speculation, therefore, not only the times have dwelt, but also the types of housing are imposed. If we then consider the possibility of new student housing ongoing projects in the city of Umeå are reduced to a few sporadic initiatives. Specifically, AB bostaden is unable to cope with the crisis of student housing due to lack of state funds. Today, the company is developing a new complex for students adjacent to the university campus in Lilljansberget. The project involves single apartments of approximately 35sqm outfitted with kitchen, bathroom and living room.

“AB Bostaden wants to build small apartments in Lilljansberget for rental to young clients, not only students. In so doing, the company aims at the possibility for a future tenant to buy the apartment in which he/she lived in. This possibility, however, seems hardly affordable... especially now with the crisis, I dare you to find a bank willing to give you a loan.” 2

At present, it seems that submitting to the state of the market is the only condition and response to the lack of housing slow to arrive. In addition, the tendency to create small apartments in reality does not meet the full range incoming students in the city. There is not a clear consideration and research about the various needs that the student-group entails.

Note
1. Örjan Wikforss, “Housing and the Role of the Architect”, UMA public lectures series
2. Tomas Strömberg, planarkitekt, Detailplanning, Umeå Kommun
Foreign students as actors of urban life
Student shape the city

Umeå is certainly a rapidly growing city not only for its promotion as “Capital of Culture in 2014” but I find that unlike other campuses the municipality is not giving space to the students community who arrives each year. The dormitories certainly allow the coexistence of different students and help integrate part of them, but the rooms are not enough and there are problems there too.

Umeå relies part of its actual condition and economy on incoming students to Umeå university. This affects facilities, activities and the urban shape in itself. Looking at the future plan for the municipality does not give us a precise and real appearance of the students’ presence in the city and for that I engaged with students at Umeå university to understand more their relation with the city. We cannot deny the potency of the university within the urban fabric and that precisely its presence is the first real reason for population’s growth in Umeå kommun. The presence of such institution within the territory means not only new students and workers, a need of new infrastructures and national notoriety but such an academic environment asks for more developed social conditions.

The problem of student housing

The issue of diversification becomes even more outstanding when we consider where students live once they have arrived in Umeå. The university provides room for all Third country students coming to Umeå as free movers and all the students within the Erasmus exchange program. All the other students from Sweden
All these rooms are reserved for exchange students. As they are 90% of our customer group. All these students are International Students. Locations where we have those rooms are Mariehem, Ålidhem, Berghem and Nydalanhöjd. 70% of the rooms are in Ålidhem however.

International housing office, Umeå University

We had 723 students without accommodations during autumn 2013. Now the situation has changed but still there are 243 students without a room.

Molly, Emergency housing office, Umeå University
Interrelation between Umeå Municipality and Umeå University
Dormitories in the city and monthly money-flow.

1.152.000 sek
for renting single rooms
and Europe must look for accommodation by themselves if the university does not have any room left. The accommodation service system is municipally owned by AB Bostaden via its internet webpage through which, after registration, one can search for an accommodation. However this system is not enough.

In fact, the University of Umeå rent around 460 single rooms to reserve to exchange students and the remaining rooms to Third country students and free movers. The administration of these rooms is run by IHO office (Student Housing System) at Umeå university, but it has been established a second service called Emergency student Housing.

Emergency student housing is a service provided by the Student Union in collaboration with AB Bostaden and a small network of citizens which offers temporary housing for students who can not find a place once they arrive. This year, however, the system failed to fully cover the demand for housing and during autumn 2013 there were 773 students (674 foreign students - 83 Swedish students) requesting aid service of housing. The problem is then partially retracted and 501 students were able to find accommodation. The case arose again during the second academic semester in which 243 students (220 foreign students - 23 Swedish students) have applied for an emergency housing 161 but were unable to find accommodation independently and 4 of them are still officially without stable housing.
Student corridors

The diagram shows the amount and the average price for a simple student room. That is because a student room is intended to be the cheapest accommodations for student at Umeå university. The price for a single room changes depending on different factors: floor, elevator, location of the room in the corridor, staircase, etc. AB Bostaden offers the same typology of student rooms and its surface fluctuates around 18 and 20 sqm. Each room has private toilet, guard-robe, bed, armchair, chair, desk and small table. In the price it is already include electricity, water and heating. Internet it is included only for an exchange students.

- Room reserved for Umeå University within the building
Mapping diversification

I think it is crucial to understand incoming students as a diverse set of experiences and resources that not always coincide and that determine differences within the group itself. Involving both Swedish and foreign students in the research, it appeared immediately clear how it is misleading to think that the student life is the same for each of them. For example, the opportunity to attend some public places, share living facilities or use public transports change if you consider students from other countries. During the experience I had with several students at the main campus I had the opportunity to know what are the habits of some of them.

The survey revealed a clear distinction between Swedish students and foreign students. For instance, some members of the first group manifested the possibility to attend public places where prices are above the average or the fact of being able to live in highly residential areas in central Umeå. We must remember also that Swedish students are able to use the state grant CSN, which assures him a salary every month. Such conditions lead to a first diversification within the same student group.

But the differences also exist between foreign students in exchange program and free movers. While the former is usually set to Umeå for 6-9 months, the second group is more stable and their stay may last a few years. Therefore, the expectations and needs differ and an erasmus student is more flexible for a temporary accommodation.
Student Card is a discount and benefit card for students in Sweden. Since 1995, it has helped students to simplify everyday life by communicating special offers and discounts.

Mecenat AB

Mecenat AB publishes  Mecenatkortet in cooperation with the Swedish National Union of Students. Mecenatkortet is free for both students and student unions each semester. It facilitates the students by imparting discounts and benefits that are relevant during the study period.
Ålidhem centrum

It seems that the municipality has not carried out a wider long-term project to meet the demand for student accommodations. This group needs different housing conditions from other groups of citizens and in the past the municipality supply to their need of accommodation with creating student districts such as Ålidhem, Mariehem and Carlshem. In those districts most of the student are living in a corridor where they inhabit a single room and they share all the other facilities.

In the particular case of Ålidhem, the type of corridor they are living in is a result of the Miljon program's from the ‘60s and ’70s. In fact, Ålidhem was settled during the boom of enrollments at Umeå university and the municipality had to face the need to create housing for all the new incoming students. Today it is still the student district par excellence, densely populated and characterized by an active social life which comes as consequence of melting pot of different people. Moreover other commercial activities have settled within the neighborhood. In between the AB Bostaden residences have sprung up a Iraqi grocery, an Asian, a second-hand shop run by a Bangladeshi and an informal mosque.

Informal housing market

Given the difficulty in finding an accommodation, situations of informality also occur. Even if a single room in a corridor is thought to be the cheapest accommodation available on the market at the moment, we are talking about 2500 sek per month for a 19 sqm room with bathroom and shared kitchen. However, there are cases of students who prefer to share the same room. Officially, this practice is not allowed by AB Bostaden but there are cases where some students establish a real network of contacts in order to secure a place to sleep once transferred to Umeå. This network branches usually within a restricted circle of persons from the same country and those who share this room always try to do it for short periods and frequently move the students involved. It is important to understand that in such a contingency there are communities and resources that diverge between each other. Some students can not afford such accommodation or simply they have a cultural background in which to live isolated does not belong to their behaviour. Why doesn't the municipality conceive a plan with peculiarities and diversifications which enable students facilities and accommodations?

What is the attitude of the municipality towards these actions?
Student realities within a corridor

Through the investigation of students habits, sharing has always appeared relevant in their everyday life. This push us to question which kind of spaces they inhabit and which added value they bring in with themselves.
Landscape of actions
"I would like to share my corridor with more tidy and clean persons."

"No, we were sharing a room there but the guy who owned the room came back to Bangladesh. At that time a friend of mine was renting the room so we started sharing it. For us it is possible to share such a single room. Actually, if we would live alone it would be very problematic. I would feel lonely, I would start thinking about my roots and my parents all the time.

"Since I moved in I bought new furnitures for my room."

"I usually spend much of my time in school so I am rarely at home and I barely use the common spaces."

"No I didn’t rearrange my room so much because in six months I will leave."

"I think I will probably share my room if it would be cheaper."

"When I came here very few people had a room; since the very beginning I was living in Njödala and starting from that period I met many people without a place to stay. Some of them slept in our mosque for a while. I also hosted two guys in my room for a short period because they weren’t able to find a place to stay and they came from Bangladesh.

"I think I will probably share my room if it would be cheaper."

"When I heard from you I was really interested in knowing your idea about my project. I wanted to build students accommodations for students since in these period there is a lack of them in the city. I am working within the university so I know there are many students always looking for accommodations.

"I built the partition’s walls by myself so lately it would be possible to dismantle them."

"When I read your e-mail I was really curious to understand what you were looking for...

"When I heard from you I was really interested in knowing your idea about my project. I wanted to build students accommodations for students since in these period there is a lack of them in the city. I am working within the university so I know there are many students always looking for accommodations.

"I am waiting to start the construction because I am still waiting to know precisely what the municipality decided about my proposal of reconversion."

"I usually spend much of my time in school so I am rarely at home and I barely use the common spaces.

"I think I will probably share my room if it would be cheaper."

"I built the partition’s walls by myself so lately it would be possible to dismantle them."

"When I heard from you I was really interested in knowing your idea about my project. I wanted to build students accommodations for students since in these period there is a lack of them in the city. I am working within the university so I know there are many students always looking for accommodations.

"I am waiting to start the construction because I am still waiting to know precisely what the municipality decided about my proposal of reconversion."
Investigation
Students mapping

Process
Detaljsplanering office

Testing
Garage habitat

“I live in Ålidhem...like all the other students I know”

“I think the center is the place I like the most to go shopping in MVG or in the other shopping malls”

“I don’t really like Ålidhem centrum, I think the centrum is sad?”

“What is Pedagogränd? Next time it would be much better with the name of the street!”

“When I read your e-mail I was really curious to understand what you were looking for...”

“It doesn’t matter how an area is suited to be established as student housing, the decision to dedicate it to this part of the population depends solely on the construction company involved in the project. From what he says, there have been several cases of feasibility studies in ideal areas for student residences but then they have been turned into residential apartments, not affordable for students.”

“At the end of a study of an area, our office edits a complete documentation about it in which also recommends the best destination of it, but this does not guarantee that this is going to happen.”

“I never thought about this solution, it looks interesting.”

Structure: 3,679 sek

“I built the partition’s walls by myself so lately it would be possible to dismantle them”

“Oh...I am living in the opposite building, I am renting my flat from Kenneth. What are you making? Is this a house?”

“When I heard from you I was really interested in knowing your idea about my project. I wanted to build student accommodations for students since in these periods there is a lack of them in the city. I am working within the university so I know there are many students always looking for accommodations.”

“I am waiting to start the construction because I am still waiting to know precisely what the municipality decided about my proposal of reconversion.”

“Hi...I am living in the opposite building, I am renting my flat from Kenneth. What are you making? Is this a house?”

“Hello: I am living in the opposite building, I am renting my flat from Kenneth. What are you making?”

“Hi...I am living in the opposite building, I am renting my flat from Kenneth. What are you making? Is this a house?”

“I usually spend much of my time in school so I am rarely at home and I barely use the common spaces.”

“When I came here very few people had a room; since the very beginning I was living in Njdala and starting from that period I met many people without a place to stay. Some of them slept in our mosque for a while. I also hosted two guys in my room for a short period because they weren’t able to find a place to stay and they came from Bangladesh.”

“No, we were sharing a room there but the guy who owned the room came back to Bangladesh. At that time, a friend of mine was renting this room so we started sharing it; for us it is possible to share such a single room. Actually, if we would live alone it would be very problematic. I would feel lonely, I would start thinking about my roots and my parents all the time.”

“When I heard from you I was really interested in knowing your idea about my project. I wanted to build student accommodations for students since in these periods there is a lack of them in the city. I am working within the university so I know there are many students always looking for accommodations.”

“I am waiting to start the construction because I am still waiting to know precisely what the municipality decided about my proposal of reconversion.”

“Hello: I am living in the opposite building, I am renting my flat from Kenneth. What are you making?”

“When I read your e-mail I was really curious to understand what you were looking for...”

“Structure: 3,679 sek”
"Emigrant’s experience is a very peculiar and specific one. It’s essentially nomadic, you are always encountering world that you don’t quite understand. I have experience deterritorialization. The fact is that your roots are cut. I go back to Sweden and I feel as a foreign there as I feel in America; they are both interesting experiences but also an unsettling world.

In some sense, There’s no way to really settling down in the new world because you have been disconnect-ed to the world you came from. So I’m fascinated by a certain level but protected by it because there is a way there s not way to truly enter into that world you have selected to level on, you are always feeling like you are looking through a glass wall.

Lars Lerup, “Ecological urbanism”
Red Corner talks, 2009"
Bangladesh is really small country but I think the population’s density is the first one all around the world. Do you know how many? 160 millions.

It’s a lot. I have a friend from Pakistan and he’s used to think in million people, in my country we count in thousands and here in Sweden maybe they could count in hundreds (he laugheds).

How do you know the guy you sharing the room with? Were you friends before?

He is not my friend, he came to Sweden and we met here in Umeå for the very first time. He is a student at my current university but he is attending another master programme.

Do you know any other student or do you have any other friend who comes from your home country?

Yes I have a lot of friends here in Umeå, we are more than fifty students from Bangladesh and we use to meet each other usually once in a month or every two months. Than we also have traditional global meetings like EID during which we use to meet all together. But that is a general thing...

Usually my friends and I get in contact through Facebook to fix a place and we meet at someone’s place. Some of them are living in Pedagogränd, we meet just to gossip or discuss to have some fun. We live in very congested spaces, it is not a problem for us. For instance in Bangladesh all my family lives in one house: my parents, my brother, my sister, her daughter and son. It is the same situation with my friends!

I thought it could depend on the cultural background somehow.

Yes...sometimes it could be a problem for the neighbours and we try to not be too noisy.

How long have you lived here in Ålidhem?

It is almost one year. Before moving in in this corridor, I lived in Pedagogränd as well.

Why did you move out? (silence) Is it a private question?

No, we were sharing a room there but the guy who owned the room came back to Bangladesh. At that time, a friend of mine was renting this room so we started sharing it; for us it is possible to share such a
single room. Actually, if we would live alone it would be very problematic. I would feel lonely, I would start thinking about my roots and my parents all the time. My family's relation is very emotional, they call me every day asking how I am doing reminding me that I can come back home in every moment if I would feel the necessity.

How did your friend get this room? did he get any help or advance from the university?

No. He was registered in Bostaden’s website and after six of seven months he entered a cue and he got the room. He told me about the company’s regulation and that it is not allowed to live more than a person in this kind of unit. He talked to the company and he said that he was going to have a guest for few days. (a girl comes to our table)

How much do you pay for your room? I would ask you because I previously know that some the corridor’s rooms have different prices related to their position in the building - the one close to the kitchen is supposed to be more noisy and the tenant has a reduced bill.

It is 2353 sek. I knew the room in front of mine is paying a little bit more because is bigger. Sometimes I talked to my corridor-mates to inform them that I use to share my room with another student but I can feel that they are not completely ok with these situation. Particularly when we are using the kitchen.
I let them know that another person will use my room and they can feel free to come to me and tell me if there’s any problem. I will try to solve it. I am completely aware of Bostaden’s rule and they told me it is possible to share the room but not with continuity. It is allowed to have guest but they shouldn’t stay too long.

I don’t think someone from the company would come and check the situation in the corridor. I also had some guests during my staying here in Älhyem and I think it is resonable to share a room like ours. Then, we should discuss what continuity means for Bostaden and how they fix the maximum amount of time to share a room.

I even thought this is a common rule in each Bostaden single apartment. Do you know if there is any limitation in the number of tenants for each flat? For instance in a three bedrooms apartment, how many people could live? In Africa usually a family as several children so I wonder if there would be any problem for them to live in such a place.
When I came here very few people had a room; since the very beginning I was living in Njdala and starting from that period I met many people without a place to stay. Some of them slept in the place we used to pray. I also hosted two guys in my room for a short period because they weren’t able to find a place to stay.

Do you know if there’s any kind of unofficial report about people looking for an accommodation?

Yes, there are several groups on Facebook for instance. Usually there are open groups where everybody puts up different advices to rent a room.

Ok and what about your staying here in Sweden? Do you get a fellowship?

No I’m not receiving any fellowships or loans, I have to pay my living costs. I’m not paying tuition fee because I started my studies in 2010.

I got to know about the governmental law, I know it has been a recent decision to introduce fees for non EU students in Sweden... But what do you know about the Bangladesh guys ? Are they now looking for a job or they has been able to find one already?

Most of them found a permanent job but because of the language, they only got a job in less specialized fields as restaurants. I know also people hired in really good position but that it was possible just because they know Swedish fluently.

Do you speak Swedish then?

No, but I’m planning to finish my studies and my job in order to have time later on to learn Swedish. I will take one year to learn it properly, I already understand something, this language sounds familiar to me, I don’t think it would be very hard.

No, I think is somehow close enough to English so it shouldn’t be so hard to get into it. But talking about your idea to start a company, are you working or are you referring to some specific institute to do that?

No, my idea is to start my own company on a internet-based activity, then I would probably refer to Uminova. I would involve them later on, when I could be able to prove my work and I would have money enough, maybe they could hire me as consultant.

Even though English is taught in almost every place, it is still indispensable to be really part of the society.
There is a guy from my country, he started to collaborate with Uminova so I know this could be realized but first, I have to show my capacities.

**Why did you choose Umeå university? How did you get here in the very north of Sweden?**

Actually I haven’t got the precise idea to come here in Umeå; in the beginning, talking and sharing thoughts with some friends of mine, I applied for Lund University and then, making some researches, I found out this university. I discovered the education was good and living in Umeå it didn’t seems so expensive to me. Furthermore, the city itself looked as a calm and well-sized city in which study in.

**Are there other friends of yours that are currently studying in Sweden?**

Yeah, they are also from Dacca.

**Are there other countries that are renowned for their education?**

Yes, England is the first country in our rankings, then follows Austria...Sweden is not the top one. In England is easier to get a job once you finish your studies; even more, everybody already knows and speaks English and that allows people to study and to work at the same time. This is not achievable in Sweden.

**Why do you think that?**

Because even if you would be able to find a part time job here, they are not going to pay you enough to support your studies and your living costs.

**But do you think you would like to stay in Sweden after your graduation? I personally think it would be worth for me to stay and see what actually my possibilities are here.**

I want to stay as well, but I don’t want to be a survivor.

**Sorry?**

I don’t want to fight and struggle to have the minimum but I would like to reach a nice and comfortable position. I want to able to earn money, spend them and allow me everything I need for me and my future family.

Yes, I can understand your point of view, but I think that from the beginning everyone has to be a little “survivor” to reach his goals.

Yeah of course, but at least I am trying to do my best *(he smiles)*

**Now I would ask you more about the Bangladeshi community here in Sweden and about the annual meeting you use to have...**

Sure! Every year we organize EID ceremony in a local we rent from Bostaden for which we don’t have to pay. Usually we use Bostaden’s local on the ground floor in Stipendiegården. The event changes date every year because the calendar is based on the Arabic one which is based on the Moon position. In so doing, we cannot rent too much in advance, you know... This year is going to happen on the 20th
of December, next year it will be different because the Arabic calendar has 355 days, so the length is reducing every “conventional” year.

**Usually, who join this event?**

We invite everybody, it is allowed to bring as many friends as you want, it is a really open and kind celebration. I also invite my school friends if they feel like coming, I like to bring in people to show what our culture is about. Then, some of my Bangladeshi friends have Swedish girlfriend and they bring them everytime is possible.

**I think it would be nice to try your hospitality then.**

Sure, come!

**Talking again about the place you are living in. What do you think about it? Have you changed furnitures?**

I think it is kind of small for me and I replaced all the furnitures Bostaden provided in the beginning. I only have that desk (pointing at my desk). I didn’t like this stuff and as me, many of the students I know are trying to get rid of those very dated furnitures.

**And what do you think about the common spaces in our corridors?**

I think they are ok, they are working in a way...

But you know what? I’m bored of Ålidhem **parties**, last year I had enough of drinking, meeting girls. Then to not bother my corridor mates i had to clean everything before the morning after. Now I prefer to have a cozy evening with some friends chilling and talking together, I like to have more interactive and social nights. Lately this is not possible since Bostaden is refurbishing the common area. Those m*********, how are they working? It will take two months to renew my kitchen, I have many complaints about this situation. They should take also the responsibility for the inconvenience. Come on, if you want a cup of tea I have to go three times far away from my place in the other corridor. That is why sometimes I just prefered to come to them *(he points the wall that divided my from his friends room)* probably you saw me several times having dinner with them because I’m so tired of going in another kitchen to prepare my meals. I also make food for them, it is an equal exchange! It turned out a friendly gathering each evening in which we constantly share our food.

**I didn’t see you often having dinner with those guys last year, what did it change then so far? How do you know them?**

I know them for long. I don’t really know how we started *(he laughs)*. In Bangladesh, friendships **relation** are really strong and closed, that is why we meet and keep so much in contact. But I met most of them in the university and after two years we became friends.
Housing garage
Architectural Intervention

During my research, I got in contact with a person who is going to reconvert one of his property into student housing. This collaboration gave me the opportunity to know him and the site of the intervention. Talking with the landlord I had the opportunity to show him and discuss new possibilities to reuse the building listening to his requirements and ideas. Then I began to know more about the bureaucratic process of construction, permission and time of realization. Through my involvement I started to foresee an opportunity of collaboration between students and residents and I gained a new knowledge of the space and it showed the opportunity to inhabit the garage in different ways.
The structure is based on the sequence of wooden frames assembled together. The beginning is perhaps the most unstable moment and requires the presence of two people, but once the first corner is standing it is possible to complete the structure independently.
During the collaboration with the owner of one garage in Teg, I developed a quick idea in order to make the space liveable and ready to host two students at the same time. The prototype would emulate and show a possible solution applicable in each garage which would be converted and rented out.

The structure is based on the sequence of frames stable once assembled together. The beginning is perhaps the most unstable and requires the presence of two people, but once you set the first picture is the following simple screw.
Towards an affordable real estate market
The reinvention and the reimagining of cities is taking place all over the world. The energy that inspires reinvention either comes from pressure - when negative forces lead to a breakthrough, which is what I noticed in Lagos - or cities get their energy from striving. Cities are machines for emancipation. When the striving for emancipation is at its most intense, when there is the clearest promise of success, change is at its most intense.

Rem Koolhaas, “The invention and reinvention of the city” Journal of International Affairs, 2012

The urban development we are witnessing in Umeå is defining roles and actors inside itself. There is certainly a strict separation between those who are active and take part in this plan and who is on the outside of the system and can rarely and laboriously join it. If we consider the real-estate market system, the place we live seems to define who you are, it tells about your social condition. This is really unfair condition which enlarges the separation between citizens and leads towards an even more undemocratic use of urban space.

Such a condition of inequality is much more amplified if you are in a country that is not your own and your economic resources are limited due to the lack of a job. In the case of Umeå the exclusion of students from the future urban development is clear and visible.1

Just referring to the students as a group and reserving them specific spaces and placing them in on specific district would end up creating small, isolated villages that are characterised by cosmopolitan environments but with little chance of social interaction between the inhabitants and residents Umeå. I do not believe in creating neighbourhoods in which you can dislocate a specific social group. What is missing in Umeå is just lively social interaction, which can be enriched by the arrival of a young and foreign community and their necessity to feel and take part in a new city and population.

A sharing population

Calling up such a young and cosmopolitan population is in my opinion a feature to be taken full advantage of for cultural and social development in Umeå. Through the settlement of different cultures and personalities it reveals the possibility to create unexpected spaces of aggregation and different facilities compared of what we are used to. The cultural backgrounds of new incoming students imply a new interface of the city, made of halls to celebrate Eid al-Adha2 or unexpected cricket fields in small playgrounds. The presence
of foreign students opens up new socio-ecological possibilities. Furthermore they implement architectural diversity.

If we believe in the city as a machine of emancipation, we will see proves of adaptation and we could conceive new prospectives and way of inhabiting it. In the case of foreign students there is a potential in their trend of sharing and look for cheap housing solutions. During the exploration of Alidhem I came to know the existence of a small network of rooms which worked as platform for new incoming students. The network takes place within AB Bostaden single rooms in which sharing is not formally permitted so everything is happening in unofficial way. However this solution provides the students a fast and really cheap accommodation once they are in Umeå and it gives them time to find some others places.

Why couldn’t we imagine such a solution even in order to face the lack of housing in Umeå? How can we conceive a network system outside municipality properties?

Garaging of foreign students

Great urban plans have often failed or led to unexpected effects. The will for a strict control of the territory sometimes generates the spontaneous formation of illegal settlements, and large-scale plans impoverish diversity and subjectivity. People feel often manipulated by over imposed decisions which affect communities and neighbourhoods. I think today there is a clear and neat separation between urban planning and architecture and this gap can be filled only by operating and proposing other ways of intervening in the territory. Intervening in small communities by enhancing forces and actors in such situations might help to prevent a rupture with institutions.

“The future of cities today depends less on buildings and in fact it depends more on the fundamental reorganization of socio economic relations. The best idea of shaping the city in
Västra Teg

Varhuden 30
site of intervention
Informality is productive, opening up alternatives in the over-programmed and over-capitalized cities of the rich world by injecting life into the downtowns or offering off-beats solutions to living in saturated property markets and depressed labor markets.

Fran Tonkiss, Informality and Its Discontents - Informalize! Essays on the Political Economy or Urban Form

The future will not come from enclaves of economic power in abundance but from sectors in conflict and scarcity from which an urgent imagination can really inspires us to rethink urban growth today."

The research question led me to think about the possibility of a connection for an affordable accommodation for students who need a room once you arrive in Umeå. Since the very beginning, this reflection has shown a further advancement to develop a more complex organisation system until the realisation of what I call a contrariwise urban development.

The occurring situation of lack of accommodations for students (and not only that) and the actual real estate market scenario in Umeå manifests an unmistakable discontent and a widespread loss of confidence in the institutions. In fact, the system that now drives the creation of new housing in the city is dictated on the one side by speculation of big constructors and on the other side by a non-transparent municipality’s role. But if we are not able to stop the incumbency of big companies which are free to set prices and standards by themselves, then we should seek an answer from private initiatives.

The idea of self-organized groups already exists in some European cities and the emergence of such initiatives has showed great potential. From this point of view the already mentioned projects, which are very much orientated towards individual ownership are opening up the property market for new target audiences. In other terms, this form of urbanism through individual projects can only be extended under great difficulty to include the whole breadth of society and the limits of such strategies of individualisation are for example clearly determined by the necessity of a building mortgage or substantial cultural capital.

From my point of view, creating sustainable housing is not here understood as the creation of new...
spaces but rather as densification of the existing urban fabric of Umeå.

In order to defeat the strong speculation that is going on in the city and in order to avoid a further segregation of the student class in certain areas, the project branches out within already existing family environments. Bring inside rather than distinguish.

The aim is therefore to bring the students outside of the areas where they live and are usually partially segregated.

The intention to use existing garages supports the need for an economically feasible housing and the very development of certain neighbourhoods in Umeå that would not be possible otherwise.

**Why garaging?**

“Nowadays Masterplan is dead. How can we design the urban?”

The choice of looking at garages starts from their very materiality. As
Analysis of Västra Teg neighborhood
No way!
objects, they usually stand within a private plot which is part of a familiar core and they are normally used to collect and store someone's goods. A garage is already set in a define environment and this is the main reason to look at them. They are part of a house, a family, a community. This belongingness that comes from a familiar surrounding discerns garages with carefulness despite of other spaces in the city.

The real understanding of the urban context is also very important. As architects it is necessary to embrace a social approach and foresee our design as a strong action which is going to affect people, relations, negotiations and behaviours. Urban development strengthens if it empowers and encourages the community to take care and participate.

Notes
1. I refer to the analysis of the construction-actors in the city, pp.34-35
2. Eid-ul-Adha (‘festival of Sacrifice’), also known as the Greater Eid, is the second most important festival in the Muslim calendar.

"The situational urbanism confronts planners and architects with the entirety of the dynamic societal realities and the resulting pluralist processes of decision-making. It forces us to no longer ignore the political, cultural, ethnic, economic, ecological and finally social aspects of planning and building. It is based upon the diversity of the everyday in urban life."

Jesko Fezer, Mathias Heyden
“The Ambivalence of Participation and Situational Urbanism”

The festival remembers the prophet Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice his son when God ordered him to. For more http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/islam/eid_haj.shtml
3. Alidhem centrum pp.50-51
4. Teddy Cruz, “How architectural innovations migrate across borders “
5. Jesko Fezer / Mathias Heyden
“The Ambivalence of Participation and Situational Urbanism”
6. Dana Cuff, Lecture “Architecture’s metropolitan desire”, Thursday 16th January
A contrariwise urbanism
A contrariwise urbanism
Dynamic of alteration
Displacement

The backyards of single-family houses are very interesting. The opening up of backyards offers the opportunity of new encounters and could provide a new space of contact between foreign students and Umeå city. The site for such intervention is ideally a residential area in which diversity is not so present. The neighbourhoods of VästraTeg, Sofiehem and Haga are characterised by many single villas with an annexed garage in their backyards. The idea of using garage as student accommodation redirects them towards a more profitable use. Disused or even abandoned properties could be retrofitted in order to re-establish them as student housing. The decision of

"Actually a building is the most expensive solution you could think of for almost any given problem. Fundamentally design should be much more interested in solving problems and create new conditions."

Parvin Alastair, “Architecture for the people by the people”, TED talks
densification of such district would even be profitable for the municipality which will not have invest in new lands and constructions. The densification process occurs in low-density residential areas where property speculation is still not strong.

Looking at the landscape of typologies in Umeå the minimum surface for the accommodation is approximately 35-40 sqm. The garage location within the plot doesn’t really influenced the reconversion. The program redirects also dis-used and abandoned property in order to give them back to their community. This choice would be supported by the municipality which won’t invest in new lands and constructions and it is not longer asked to plan specialized districts.
Allowing individuals to take part in this urban development is not always possible. For instance, the chosen garage has to follow some requirements. Looking at the landscape of possibility, the minimum surface for the accommodation is approximately 35-40 sqm. The garage location within the plot doesn't really influence the reconversion. In the garage is required a minimum surface to be reconverted as liveable facility in order to host at least two students. Their locations within the city will be a trigger for the development of a new hybrid community.

1. Garaging urbanism

Potential districts in Umeå: VästraTeg, Haga and Sofiehem

In Umeå there are several suburbs which could implement the densification of the city backyards but in order to fit as students accommodations, the university campus has to be reachable.

Case study: VästraTeg
Empowerment

Using a garage as a temporary accommodation will settle the student in a familiar environment. In fact, a student will relate directly with the owner and they will install a direct relationship knowing each other. The interrelation between foreign students and private owners is able to open new scenarios of bottom up urban development. In fact through coexistence of these two groups, it will enable new collaborations and experiments in city-shaping.

The reconversion activates synergies between the landlord and the student and between the landlord and the municipality which is asked to release fast and feasible permits.
Garaging entails **new relations**:

1. **Students-tenant/Landlord:**
The idea of spreading students in residential parts of the city in which they are normally not present is a trigger for cultural contamination. In fact, the settlement of students as new identities in an already given neighbourhood as Västra Teg could bring in productive capabilities and a fresh bottom-up development of the area.

2. **Landlord/municipality:**
The opportunity to use garages as independent dwellings is not new in Umeå and there are existing examples of such re-conversion. In order to obtain a building permit for the re-conversion of the garage into living facility is necessary to submit the preliminary project to the Municipality. Here, the Detaljplanning office examines the affected area and determine whether the conversion is possible under the restrictions applied to that particular area (in Umeå there are different regulations for different areas). Usually the applicant has to wait around 20-24 months to get a
Before the reconversion

Garage

- The building has four large garages to store cars. Currently one of them is the owner’s and the others are rented out to private and companies.

Storage

- The basement is storage place for the owner and tenants.

Workshop

- It is possible to use the inner space as workshop because of its supply of water, electricity and heating system.

After the reconversion

Interrelations, functions and uses

Accommodation

- Through the Emergency housing service the place is rent out to incoming students who need accommodation.

Neighbourhood

- Settle down new students means also provide them services and facilities that could increase the economy in the area.

Open-kitchen

- In the weekend it is possible to organize a cooking activity to meet other cultures.

Storage

- The basement of the building is storage place for the owner and some of the tenants.

Interrelations

- People living in the area gets involved in new activities and get to know a new community in their neighbourhood.

Open-space

- The students living here have a peaceful place to study during the week and an open platform to meet friends.
The garage is transformed in accommodation for students. In the first step of the project it doesn’t necessarily required a second story but it is possible to use the already existing building and its basement in order to create rooms and public facilities.

Before the reconvertion

The big space of the garage is currently fully used as storage and parking place. The building relates not only with its owner but even with external tenants and companies which are storing material in its basement.

After the reconvertion

Inhabiting the garage set a new way of living in the whole neighbourhood.

1. Student-tenant/The owner:

The idea of spreading students in really unusual residential part of the city is a trigger for new encounters. The student housing is a profitable activity but it has to be controlled through particular institutions (Hyresgästföreningen) or the municipality itself in order to avoid speculation to the detriment of the student.

2. The owner/municipality:

The project of reconvertion has to be approved by the municipality. The idea is to define precisely the retrofitting as student housing in order to obtain a faster and feasible reconvertion. The bureaucratic process which the municipality has to follow is sometimes really long and strict. The aim is to change and adapt the “Enviromental zoning assessment” for the very particular case of student housing.

The presence of more students within the neighbourhood introduces new activities in the basement spaces and the students community intensifies its inter-relations with Varghudden tenants.
I think the municipality should shorter times and facilitate citizens who are intentioned in such a re-conversion. Even more, some of the zoning restrictions are not necessary if we consider students needs. For instance, in the case study of Varghuden 30, the regulation asks for 0.6 parking spaces per apartment with one or two rooms but the average student hasn’t got a car thus this rule doesn’t suit. Another requirement from the zoning plan is to reserve a surface as big as one third of the total living area for open space. This specification could be actually solved if we think that the garage is part of an existing plot with a wide backyard.

So the set of new planning rules aims to obtain a faster and feasible jurisdiction from the Municipality. The aim is to change and adapt the “Environmental zoning assessment” for a more reasonable and equal use of the land.

Note
1. The Detaljplanering is the municipal planning office in Umeå municipality. The office manages rules and regulations concerning buildings, streets, parks and recreational areas. It also takes decisions about building permits.
"Architects and other producers of cultural capital can no longer live rhetorical, aesthetic poetry like another villa of Frank Gehry but we have to relate to social and political problems of the world. Not form, as celebrating freestanding objects, but thinking in the relation what spatial agencies can produce is, I think, what matters. And also to whom we address and help out to solve issues essential."

Roemer van Toorn,
“Making architecture politically”
UMA public lecture

Injection

The speculative project for the student accommodation inside a garage doesn’t require the alteration of the existing building. From a practical point of view, sometimes these small buildings are also provided with electricity and heating systems and this is a crucial aspect to make them fully liveable (the thermal insulation will be necessary anyway).

Inside, the garage is made habitable through the inclusion of a cell which provides the needed facilities for two students. The re-conversion can work also as a collaboration of neighbours and many garages could install net-system of shared facilities between each other.
The economy of sharing

One of the most important aims of the project is to think about a space that could be shared at least by two students in order to have an affordable monthly rent. For this reason, the inner wooden structure is built in order to host and serve two students. This coexistence will keep the rent affordable and create the conditions for two foreign students to meet each other in Umeå. Depending on the dimensions of the restored garage, it is possible to create different common spaces and connect them through a corridor.

Community initiative

When one garage stands close to another one, we could think about a “spread” system. In this case, it is reasonable to think of a participatory spread reconversion involving different neighbours. In so doing, each single garage one would be able to use the common spaces of the nearest.
Single entities

Net-system
Case study: Varghuden 30

Program of the building

Keeping the existing partition of the inner space, the injection of four cells give the opportunity to dedicate common spaces in different way. With only one shared kitchen for eight persons, it is possible for them to dedicate the remaining spaces for other activities.
Garage injection

Through the experience of the intervention it has been possible to foresee a cheap and fast solution to solve the interior of each garage, developing the idea of a modular concept. To spread a backyard-contamination, it will be possible to build inside the existing building a simple wooden structure that as a big furniture performs in different ways and creates different spaces.

What do they share?

Case study
Varghuden 30 reconvertion

Plan 1:100
Section 1:100

Garaging urbanism
Injection

The garage is made habitable through the inclusion of a cell.

0 m 3 m
bed rooms
bathrooms
common spaces
shared corridor
Through the experience of the intervention, it has been possible to foresee a cheap and fast solution to solve the interior of each garage, developing the idea of a modular concept. To spread a backyard-contamination, it will be possible to build inside the existing building a simple wooden structure that as a big furniture performs in different ways and creates different spaces.

**Case study**

Varghuden 30 reconvertion

---

**Plan 1:100**

**Section 1:100**

---

**Garaging urbanism**

Injection

The garage is made habitable through the inclusion of a cell.

---

**3.**

---

**Section 1:100**

1140 cm

0 1 m 3 m

bed rooms

bathrooms

common spaces

shared corridor

---

**350 cm**

---

**102**
Garage injection

Through the experience of the intervention it has been possible to foresee a cheap and fast solution to solve the interior of each garage, developing the idea of a modular concept. To spread a backyard-contamination, it will be possible to build inside the existing building a simple wooden structure that as a big furniture performs in different ways and creates different spaces.

What do they share?

Case study

Varghuden 30 reconvertion

Plan 1:100

Section 1:100

Garaging urbanism

Injection

The garage is made habitable through the inclusion of a cell.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1 m</th>
<th>3 m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>350 cm</td>
<td>1140 cm</td>
<td>1750 cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

bedrooms  
bathrooms  
common spaces  
shared corridor
Community based-initiatives indicate the ability of citizens to present solutions to challenges posed by everyday life, and use creativity to transform and multiply existing resources. Inadvertently political by nature, these initiatives are a response to the incapability of today’s cities to cope with urban challenges via traditional planning culture and its instruments.

Marcos L. Rosa, “An urban trend: residents taking ownership of their environment”

Synergies

Imaging the garaging system infesting the residential area, it is possible to foresee a new hybrid community. Students are bringing in a different socio-economic values, backgrounds and they claim for different spaces. Their presence is a catalyzer within the neighbourhood and the city of Umeå already witnessed this transformation in Ålidhem. The neighbourhood of Västra Teg could react improving its spaces and facilities, seeing not only the possibility of a new profitable activities in renting out its garages but wishing for the development of the public sector.
Scheme of synergies and interrelations within backyards, neighbourhood, city.
The university may find new places of expansion in that part of the city, providing services and spaces for its students.

In this sense, a collaboration between Akademiska Hus and Umeå municipality could help develop or restore communal property where possible. But given the scarcity of public buildings in the district and its high degree of residential, Akademiska Hus could open a development-network with local and private citizens in the area.

In fact, there are already buildings (such as houses and outbuildings, garages complexes) left in a state of neglect but with the potential to be turned into public spaces for students and citizens. These points could be strategic for the establishment of university services such as study rooms, library, wi-fi internet provided by Umeå University.

Moreover, there are already small businesses in the basement of some residential condominiums that might suggest the inclusion of other shops and services. Students support the need for local commercial activities as grocery, take away and the future development of them.

The idea of the project, aims not only to the creation of an open platform for student accommodation, but directs the potential of this group so as to benefit them and the community already exists.
the building become University’s library and recreational area for the district with the collaboration of Akademiska Hus.

Abandoned garage

Basement activity

the basement is accessible through a small door, no showcase.

Common park

second hand shop

Abandoned property is interesting site for Umeå municipality and Akademiska Hus.
the abandoned property is an interesting site for Umeå municipality and Akademiska Hus.
Engaging with foreign students gave me the opportunity to understand the great enrichment that the settlement of this community brings in the city. With their presence and their cultural background they affect the urban fabric making new sites and adapting space to their needs. When we come to the real estate market bubble then, they demonstrate the possibility to create unexpected ways of housing even though they are one of the most disadvantage band of the market.

Garaging of foreign students explores the possibility of creating affordable housing in Umeå today. Shared accommodations of foreign students, self-organized networks and private initiatives create together the platform for new affordable housing. Even more, this platform promotes encounters and social mixture. Silently, students set the ground for an affordable housing system shaped on their socio economic needs, accessible to most of them within residential backyards in Umeå. Opening up backyards through negotiations with the municipality, citizens also participate in the improvement of the urban environment they live in. Foreign students help this transformation. These synergies are the trigger of a contrariwise urban development.

But what if an affordable garage housing system would take place in mixed hybrid community in Umeå backyards? What would be the attitude of the municipality? The network of accommodations I could see in foreign students community suggested a bottom up approach and a new possible way of sharing. So can we imagine a way to integrate bottom-up urban development with top-down planning initiatives in Umeå? A contrariwise approach helps us to rethink urban development in a way that doesn’t avoid inequalities within the real estate market but actually shows the ground for an alternative.
References

Constantin Petcou / Doina Petrescu
“Acting Space. Transversal notes, on-the-ground observations and concrete questions for us all”, Urban Act


Henri Lefebvre, “The Production of Space”, translated by Donald-Nicholson-Smith, 1992

Lars Lerup, Red Corner Talks, Episode 3, 08.05.2010, architecturaltheory.eu

Marc Angéll, Rainer Hehl, “Collectivize! Essays on the Political Economy of Urban Form”, ETH Zurich

Marc Angéll, Rainer Hehl, “Informalize! Essays on the Political Economy of Urban Form”, ETH Zurich

Marcos L.Rosa, Ute E.Weiland, “Handmade Urbanism, from community initiatives to participatory models”

Nordic Journal of Architecture No.3 vol.2 winter 2012

Final report of the Citizens as Customers Studio, Strelka Institute for Media, Design and Architecture, 2011/2012

Thrift Nigel, “Non representational theory. Space, Politics, Affect”, International Library of Sociology, Lancaster University


