

Pressure and violence: Housing renovation and displacement in Sweden

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Abstract

Based on interview material relating to the current wave of housing renovation in Swedish cities, this article will analyse the profit-driven, traumatic and violent displacement in the wake of contemporary large-scale renovation processes of the so-called Million Program housing estates from the 1960s and 1970s. We maintain that the current form of displacement (through renovation) has become a regularized profit strategy, for both public and private housing companies in Sweden. We will pay special attention to Marcuse's notion of 'displacement pressure' which refers not only to actual displacement but also to the anxieties, uncertainties, insecurities and temporalities that arise from possible displacement due to significant rent increases after renovation and from the course of events preceding the actual rent increase. Examples of the many insidious forms in which this pressure manifests itself will be given – examples that illustrate the hypocritical nature of much planning discourse and rhetoric of urban renewal. We illustrate how seemingly unspectacular measures and tactics deployed in the renovation processes have far-reaching consequences for tenants exposed to actual or potential displacement. Displacement and displacement pressure due to significant rent increases (which is profit-driven but justified by invoking the 'technical necessity' of renovation) undermines the 'right to dwell' and the right to exert a reasonable level of power over one's basic living conditions, with all the physical and mental benefits that entails – regardless of whether displacement fears materialize in actual displacement or not.

Keywords

Displacement, public housing, renovation, urban renewal

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Introduction

Based on interview material relating to the current wave of housing renovation in Swedish cities, this article will analyse the profit-driven, traumatic and violent displacement in the wake of contemporary large-scale renovation processes of the so-called Million Program housing estates. The Million Program was a national housing program that resulted in the construction of roughly a million dwellings within the three main modes of tenancy, that is rental, cooperative and privately owned housing. The program ran between 1965 and 1974 and was strongly state-subsidized (Grundström and Molina, 2016). We maintain that the current form of displacement (through renovation) has become a regularized profit strategy, for both public and private housing companies in Sweden. The focus of the article is the varieties of ways in which displacement of predominantly low-income tenants is being carried out through renovation works, and how these ‘soft’ tactics effectively circumvent the legal tenant protections and the right to dwell inscribed in the Swedish rental system. While structural renovation works also take place without major rental increases (Jacobsson, 2013), the scope of this article is on displacement mechanisms in the wake of significant rent increases following renovation. We will pay special attention to Marcuse’s (1985) notion of ‘displacement pressure’ which refers not only to actual displacement but also to the anxieties, uncertainties, insecurities and temporalities that arise from possible displacement due to significant rent increases after renovation *and* from the course of events preceding the actual rent increase. Examples of the many insidious forms in which this pressure manifests itself will be given – examples that illustrate the hypocritical nature of much planning discourse and rhetoric of urban renewal. We illustrate how seemingly unspectacular measures and tactics deployed in the renovation processes have far-reaching consequences for tenants exposed to actual or potential displacement. Displacement and displacement pressure due to significant rent increases (which is profit-driven but justified by invoking the ‘technical necessity’ of renovation, as well as the need for CO₂ reduction measures) undermines the ‘right to dwell’ and undermines the right to exert a reasonable level of power over one’s basic living conditions, with all the physical and mental benefits that entails – regardless of whether displacement fears materialize in actual relocation or not. The notion of ‘the right to dwell’ as used in this article is derived in part from the complex and multifaceted framing of displacement offered by Marcuse (1986), showing how displacement needs to be considered to encompass a wider set of processes than those leading to direct physical relocation of inhabitants (see below). The ‘right to dwell’ must be understood as a right to inhabit the abstract space comprising ‘home’ in a wider sense. As Davidson (2009) points out with the help of Lefebvre and Heidegger, the ‘right to dwell’ and the ‘right to make place’ can ‘be denigrated or destroyed even if one stays in a particular space’ (p. 231). Dramatic neighbourhood change can so thoroughly change the place and the everyday lives of tenants that displacement can occur without actual physical relocation: tenants remain, but their home has been displaced from underneath their feet as it were.

With the exception of some acts of protest and resistance, the largest housing renovation project in Swedish history is being carried out without much opposition or critique. Our research seeks to highlight the deeply problematic nature of the Million Program renovation by discussing the motives of landlords and developers and by demonstrating how this affects large numbers of (mainly low-income) urban dwellers. The article is inspired by Wacquant’s eloquent call for critical research

[c]ritical thought must, with zeal and rigor, take apart the false commonplaces, reveal the subterfuges, unmask the lies, and point out the logical and practical contradictions of the

discourse of King Market and triumphant capitalism, which is spreading everywhere by the force of its own self-evidence. . . Critical thought must tirelessly pose the question of the social costs and benefits of the policies of economic deregulation and social dismantling which are now presented as the assured road to eternal prosperity and supreme happiness under the aegis of 'individual responsibility' – which is another name for collective irresponsibility and mercantile egoism. (2004: 101)

Qualitative interviews were made with residents, housing company representatives, representatives of the Rent Tribunal and representatives of the Tenants Union. The interviews were semi-structured, lasted on average about one hour and were transcribed. The conversations revolved around how tenants were experiencing the actual or planned renovation project in their building or neighbourhood, how housing companies were carrying out or planning renovation projects and how the Tenants Union perceived and worked with the planned renovation projects. The interviews were held in the city of Uppsala, north of Stockholm, during three periods in 2011, 2014 and in 2015, and in Stockholm during 2011. The interviews in Uppsala were carried out in three different areas at different stages of renovation, namely Gränby, Kvarngärdet and Eriksberg. One interview with a former employee of the Rent Tribunal was conducted in Malmö. The purpose of the second and third round of interviews in Uppsala was to return to the area studied the first time to see what had happened with those who stayed in the renovated area and to those who had left. This allows us to capture the experience of displacement and displacement pressure at different points in time and hence provides us with a richer and more nuanced picture of displacement (pressure).

While the empirical material underpinning our analysis is far from exhaustive (there are over 300 public and over 40,000 private rental housing companies in Sweden,¹ each acting on their own accord, and in the case of municipal companies under different political party majority, and in their own unique geographical setting), our respondents cover a range of different circumstances. They live both in public and private housing and in different areas of the city. The commonalities were striking, but the cases were obviously not identical. This article, however, does not aim to be comparative. Nor does it aim to provide a perfectly accurate and generalizable roadmap to the process of displacement. Rather it aims to show the varieties of tactics deployed by landlords to displace low-income tenants in a system that is often and generally regarded to rest on universality, equality and strong tenant rights.

Displacement

Displacement, in spite of its widespread occurrence in cities across the globe (Lees et al., 2015) and in spite of its disturbing impact on the physical and mental well-being of displaced groups, remains remarkably underrepresented in urban studies (Desmond, 2012; Slater, 2006). Relatively few empirical studies on displacement have been undertaken (even fewer in a Swedish context) and they are predominantly Anglo-American. By reviewing the evolution of the academic debate, this geographical bias becomes apparent, and the authors are not unaware of this. However, there are clear empirical similarities between the cases reviewed and the current Swedish situation, making the conceptual evolution of 'displacement' in the literature a relevant backdrop to this study.

Displacement, or 'what happens when forces outside the household making living there impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable' (Keating et al., 1982: 3), became clearly identified as the main negative outcome of gentrification processes in North-American cities during the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Hartman, 1979; Keating et al., 1982; Laska and Spain, 1980; Marcuse, 1985; Palen and London, 1984) as well as in Great Britain (Hamnett, 1973). Then, in the

early 1990s, the ‘unpicking’ of the gentrification/displacement relationship (Davidson, 2009) had begun through the work of, amongst others, Chris Hamnett (1991, 1994, 2003). Hamnett argued that what we were witnessing was not *displacement* but the *replacement* of the contracting working classes with the expanding middle classes that ‘re-entered’ inner-city neighbourhoods. Quantitative research by Freeman and Braconi (2004) took this further and argued that people in gentrified neighbourhoods in New York were actually 19% *less likely* to move out of the neighbourhood than from non-gentrified neighbourhoods between 1996 and 1999. Inhabitants of gentrifying neighbourhoods apparently went at great length to stay put so as to enjoy improved service levels – a research conclusion that was eagerly picked up by the mainstream media (USA Today: ‘*Studies: Gentrification a Boost for Everyone*’). Likewise, McKinnish et al. (2008) argue that there is no evidence of displacement of poor non-white households from gentrifying areas between 1990 and 2000. Rising average income levels in these areas is due to the influx of white college graduates and the retention of black high school graduates. Schloming and Schloming (2010: 529), commenting on Hartman and Robinson’s (2010) attempt to factually demonstrate the magnitude and impact of the neglected problem of eviction, dismiss Hartman and Robinson’s concern about eviction on the grounds that

[p]eople have often flourished by wandering, so displacement and mobility are not inherently bad. The ‘hidden’ problem is not evictions, but how homelessness has been caused by protections enacted in the name of helping the poor. . . successive waves of us wandered as immigrants to a new land and gave the energy and vitality that very quickly turned the United States into the world’s most advanced industrial nation. . . Thus, displacement and mobility, wanted or unwanted, are not inherently or always or even most of the time bad.

The denial of eviction and displacement as existing social problems not only triggered a set of counterarguments but also a lively debate around the nature of displacement (and gentrification) research. Newman and Wyly (2006) point to the simple fact that Freeman and Braconi studied the second half of the nineties – a period that is preceded by twenty or so years of gentrification processes that would already have displaced most of the people who could no longer afford to live in Manhattan and brownstone Brooklyn. Low levels of out-migration from gentrified areas during the second half of the nineties therefore seem unsurprising. Moreover, the control group in the ‘non-gentrified neighbourhoods’ consists of residents from some of the poorest areas of New York City, including the Bronx, where residential mobility would always be high, and certainly higher than in already gentrified neighbourhoods. Further, people not on high income can stay in gentrified areas when living in rent-controlled housing or public housing, or through accepting poor housing quality, sharing with others, enjoying the compassion of a landlord who does not charge ‘market prices’ or simply coping with extortionate housing costs (see also Wardrip et al., 2009, who bring to light that low-income groups often spend much more than ‘a third’ of their income on housing – sometimes up to 80% or 90%).

Slater (2009: 306) argues that people may stay put in gentrifying areas, in spite of rising house prices, because ‘gentrification has removed so much affordable housing that poor people in gentrifying neighbourhoods are trapped’ (indeed, in the United States, the number of affordable homes per 100 low-income households decreased from 130 in 1970 to 38 in 2010 (Dahmann, 2010, quoted in Wyly et al., 2010). Statistics used by Freeman and Braconi cannot capture the fight of people on low income to stay where they are, and neither do statistics reveal the existence and extent of government-led gentrification programs that would for obvious reasons never engage in collecting statistics on displacement due to those gentrification policies. And, Slater continues, why would we have to rely on *gentrification* to

bring ‘better services’ to the neighbourhood, or at least to those who move in or can stay? Wyly et al. (2010), while admitting that the relation between gentrification and displacement is contingent rather than necessary, are worried that the extent of displacement remains seriously underestimated:

In New York City, at least 10 000 renter households are displaced each year – a tip of an iceberg that includes many who leave the city, become homeless, double up with friends or relatives, or adapt in other ways that render them statistically invisible. (Wyly et al., 2010: 2620)

In line with this, Desmond (2012) laments our lack of knowledge of especially eviction processes, the most dramatic form of direct displacement, and, according to Desmond, also the *main source* of displacement. Slum clearance and gentrification also trigger displacement but not in the same measure as evictions. It is simply the current high cost of living in many cities that leaves the urban poor in financial ruin, which can easily lead to rent arrears and, eventually, eviction. Once evicted, most people move directly into homelessness since it is difficult to find new housing as landlords tend to not rent out to people with a conviction or an eviction. In that sense, eviction plays a pivotal role in the *reproduction and enforcement* of urban poverty. This process has clear racial and gender dimensions: ‘In poor black neighbourhoods, eviction is to women what incarceration is to men: a typical but severely consequential occurrence contributing to the reproduction of poverty’ (Desmond, 2012: 88). Goetz (2010) scrutinizes another form of displacement, namely the government-led relocation program HOPE VI that should result in a new geography of opportunity for the poor through dispersal, redevelopment, social mix, social capital enhancement, change in behaviour, better design to create defensible space and reduction of social disorganization by giving community back social control. In fact, Goetz finds, the move of poor people to marginally better neighbourhoods may leave them feeling safer but does not improve their material conditions since they *lose* vital social capital from their previous neighbourhoods on which they rely for temporary work, help and care. Poor people are being moved around under the assumption that anywhere is better than where they started.

Another pivotal effect of displacement captured in research are the strong ties to health and sickness (see Douglas Porteous and Smith, 2001; Fried, 1963; Fullilove, 2004; Marris, 1974). The correlation between health and housing has been studied extensively for at least a century, and though laying bare the actual causal relationships is difficult given the number of variables at play, the connections between poor housing and poor health are unquestioned in housing studies. Studies on relocation after renovation (Allen, 2000; Ekström, 1994) do show clear (and often severe) health effects even on temporarily relocated tenants, pointing to the traumatic rupture that relocation can have. Older people are particularly vulnerable. To be forced out of one’s home can affect elderly in a way similar to other major life events such as the loss of a spouse (Hurtig, 1995). In particular, forced displacement has shown to result in higher mortality rates than voluntary or otherwise controlled relocation (Danermark et al., 1996).

In the light of this evidence about displacement as one of the most severe social problems in today’s cities and their housing market conditions, why is it that the fate of displaced people and of low-income people in gentrified areas has received so little attention from researchers? There are, of course, serious methodological hurdles since we are studying ‘the invisible’ (Atkinson, 2000). The precarious housing situations of displaced people, people doubling up with others, etcetera, often exist outside official records, and, when traced, these people are not necessarily willing to ‘be interviewed’ about their troublesome life trajectories. As noted by Davidson (2009), most gentrification studies focus on the middle-class

experiences of gentrification through interviews with gentrifiers as subjects and the working classes appear at best as an anonymous desubjectified mass of ‘victims’ that is being ‘displaced’. This bias towards the middle-class experience of gentrification strongly relates to the ways the ‘academic nobility’ or the middle-class intelligentsia always represent the poor and the working class in relation to its own lifestyle. The working classes are then defined as ‘lacking the resources’ to ‘aspire for higher’; they are ‘failed consumers’ (Allen, 2008a).

In gentrifying areas, then, the well-meaning middle-class research community would rather pose the question how we can ‘lift everybody up’ to certain levels of middle-class consumption and lifestyles (assuming that is what the working classes want) than pose the question of ‘displacement experiences’. There are few attempts to study the fate of the marginalized and the working classes *in their own right* and *not* in relation to the needs and aspirations defined by the (researching) middle classes (see for example Paton, 2014). Allen (2008b), following Charlesworth’s (2000) phenomenological analysis of the working class, studied working class experiences of displacement fears and realities in a central Liverpool neighbourhood that was marked for large-scale demolition and renewal, with special ‘loan products’ provided by the city council so that working class inhabitants could return to ‘modern’ homes. But working class residents were not aspiring to middle-class consumption levels, middle-class lifestyles or middle-class housing ideals and the debt it implied. What the promoters behind the renewal scheme failed to understand was that ‘the repositioning of their houses within the space of positions in the market for houses violates a whole way of working-class “being” towards houses (a place to dwell rather than position within the space of positions)’ (Allen, 2008b). According to Wacquant (2009), this disdain towards the subjective experiences of the working class, the marginalized and the displaced in urban renewal research is part of a wider disdain and neglect of the working class. Together with low-service workers, the working class still constitutes the majority of the population in advanced economies, yet it is excluded from much civic and scientific debate. ‘The working class is unfashionable, inscrutable, unnoticed if not invisible’ (p. 200). Much gentrification research does not pay attention to the displaced working classes, but focuses on ‘preferences’ of the middle classes, and thereby ‘they are only following the general pattern of class blindness by urban researchers even as class inequalities sharpen before their very eyes’ (p. 200). Wyly et al. (2010) regard the deliberate statistical disappearance of its costs and victims as one of the ‘most effective tactics of neoliberalism’, with displacement and the fate of the poor in urban renewal processes no exception.

Displacement and renovation in Sweden

The Swedish housing system has sprung out of a strong welfare state with cheap high-quality housing through subsidised construction, strong tenant protections, high formal demands on quality standards and collectively negotiated rent levels (Bengtsson et al., 2013; Nylander, 2013; Salonen, 2015). One ideological underpinning was that a large and universal rental sector with affordable housing for ‘everyone’ (as opposed to social housing for the few) would create a more egalitarian and just housing regime than elsewhere. The effective implementation of this principle in post-war Sweden has led many authors to speak of the Swedish housing regime as a ‘success story’ (Christophers, 2013; Clark and Johnson, 2009; Headey, 1978; Lundqvist et al., 1990). However, efforts to liberalise the Swedish housing sector over the past decades have thoroughly transformed the Swedish housing regime to

produce gentrification (Hedin et al., 2012), reinforce social polarisation (Andersson and Molina, 2003) and reduce the size of the rental sector in general, and the public segment in particular. Public housing housed 25% of the general population in 1990 and saw its share decrease to 18% by 1989 (Bengtsson et al., 2013). The shift is even more striking at a regional level with a dozen municipalities having sold their entire stock, thereby fully withdrawing from the housing sector (Salonen, 2015). The trend has continued until today, and now only 16% of the Swedish inhabitants are housed in public housing. Regulations and housing policies of the former welfare state have collided with ever-increasing neoliberal doctrines and market intrusion to create what Brett Christophers (2013) calls a monstrous hybrid. A hybrid where both welfare regulations and the market forces work against the interests of (low-income) tenants. In some sense, the Swedish housing system is still very much regulated, but the state is no longer an active and political actor on the housing scene: 'Sweden has gradually become one of the most liberal market-governed housing markets in the Western world. State engagement is substantially less in Sweden than in the homelands of market liberalism, Great Britain and the United States' (Lind and Lundström, 2007). The market is the dominant actor and old welfare policies, structures and laws created to protect tenants are being used and/or circumvented and exploited in increasingly violent ways.

The so-called 'Million Program' was a programmatic effort by the Swedish government to oversee the construction of 1 million dwellings in 10 years (1965–1974) to build away existing housing shortages. It was actually a continuation of high rates of post-war government-led housing construction (already in 1964 90,000 homes were added (SABO, n.d.); what was new this time was its long-term perspective. In the process, hundreds of thousands inner-city homes, often in poor condition, were demolished and replaced with new homes or offices. It triggered the largest wave of housing displacement in Sweden's history, albeit firmly grounded in a social-democratic conviction of social betterment for all. Fifty years later, part of this housing stock needs technical renovation works, and The Swedish Association of Public Housing Companies (SABO, 2009), amongst others, stress the simultaneous need for ecological renovation (lifting these homes to contemporary environmental norms and standards) as well as 'social' renovation (the Million Program estates are largely occupied by poorer (non-Swedish) population segments). A recent survey amongst 119 public and private landlords (owning 12% of the Million Program housing stock) reveals that half (471 000) of the existing Million Program housing stock (922 000) is in need of structural renovation,² and a quarter of the housing stock (264 000) has already been renovated. The overall cost of these massive renovation works is estimated between 215 billion Swedish Krona (Träd och Möbelföretag (TMF), 2013), 300–500 billion (National Board of Housing (Boverket, 2014) and 300-900 billion Kronor (Industrifakta, 2013). The majority of landlords seek to finance these major renovations through rent increases according to a survey amongst 51 landlords owning Million Program housing stock by the Tenants Union (Jacobsson, 2013). Rent increases highly vary without obvious geographical pattern: most of the pressure lies in large cities because of the very concentration of Million Program housing stock in those places, but some of the highest rent increases take place in 'peripheral' cities while some minor rent increases are introduced in central cities. According to the survey, substantial rent increases do lead to significant displacement volumes (about 1 out of 5 tenants with rent increases over and above 1000 Swedish Kronor monthly for a two-bedroom apartment), while minor rent increases (less than 500 Swedish Kronor) hardly trigger displacement (Jacobsson, 2013). It is not clear from this survey whether rent increases are the main or sole reason for displacement, but at least it provides a significant indication.

That rent increases *are* an important reason behind displacement is confirmed by a recent study by the National Board of Housing (Boverket, 2014) which compares levels of out-migration from renovated apartments with out-migration levels from non-renovated apartments. Tenants in renovated apartments are 1.8 times more likely to move out than tenants in non-renovated apartments: around 25% of tenants move out from renovated flats compared with 14% from non-renovated flats. Those on low income are more likely to move out and those who move out are more likely to change apartment soon again, which suggests that tenants found only temporary housing solutions. Low-income tenants are according to this study less likely to move out in the year before renovation (when rumours about substantial rent increases are spreading) but more likely to move out after renovation and rent increases. This points at the particular pressure on low-income groups since they find it difficult, first, to move, *and*, second, to stay. Tenants who have moved receive on average higher housing benefits and social benefits, which means that they have moved to more expensive apartments. Even though rent levels are higher in their new home, tenants move to neighbourhoods with lower average income levels and worse school results, which implies that renovation and displacement result in increased segregation. Contrastingly, in the control group of tenants who live in non-renovated flats, those who change apartment move to neighbourhoods with higher average income levels and better school results. Rent increases are typically higher in metropolitan areas, with higher displacement levels as a result. By way of example, in the Backa Röd quarter of Gothenburg, Sweden's second largest city, only 4 out of 80 tenants are expected to move back after renovation and a 33% rental increase (Björk, 2014). In Gränby, Uppsala, part of greater Stockholm, 140 out of 220 tenants left due to rent increases between 18% and 34% (before organized protest the rent increase was set at 45%) (Molander, 2014).

Moreover, for those who cannot afford the rent after renovation it has become more difficult to find affordable rental accommodation elsewhere: public housing companies not only seek to finance renovation through increased rent but also through the sale of part of their rental stock to private companies which, in turn, convert more than half of them into tenant-owned apartments (Boverket, 2014). As a consequence, between 1997 and 2012, the total rental housing stock in Sweden decreased by almost 100 000 units,³ while the total apartment stock grew by more than 300 000 units⁴ in the same period (SCB, 2014), in line with the overall population growth. The number of inhabitants per apartment remained constant at 2.1 between 1997 and 2012, which puts a question mark behind the existence of a housing *shortage*.⁵ As Dorling (2014) argues, it is not the size of the housing stock that is the main problem (although it would do no harm if more houses were built), but its distribution. It is sharpening housing *inequalities* (crystallising in problems such as unaffordability or displacement), that is the main problem. There is a housing crisis for those at the bottom of the housing market which manifests itself in the first instance as a lack of *affordable* housing, in particular *rental*, forcing people into coping strategies such as moving to less attractive neighbourhoods, sharing, not leaving the parental home, overspending on rent, or the forced purchase of a mortgaged home.

The housing stock which remains in the hands of city is increasingly used to trigger profits used for non-housing purposes. Stockholm's 23 public housing companies, for example, transferred 1.4 billion Kronor to the municipal coffers in 2012 (Samuelsson, 2012) and around 3 billion Kronor in 2013 (partly through sales) (Hultman, 2014). This surplus has not been re-invested in municipal housing provision, but was used to finance other projects, often benefiting private actors (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2013). In Malmö, the municipal housing company MKB took out nearly 1 billion Kronor in profits between 2010 and 2014 (Wahlgren, 2016).

Displacement as a profit strategy

The rental housing stock of the Million Program has long remained outside the private sector's scope of interest. The Million Program estates from the 1960s and 1970s, most often located on the outskirts of the city, soon turned into unattractive neighbourhoods (from a white Swedish perspective) and became an affordable refuge for newly arrived immigrants during the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in sharp levels of ethnic segregation in Swedish cities (Andersson and Molina, 2003). In recent years, public housing companies on those estates have started to sell their rental stock to private sector actors and have themselves embarked on systematic renovation works of their remaining stock. A law reform of 2011 made public housing companies obliged to act 'business-like' and private rental companies are no longer obliged to follow rent levels set by public companies, as was the case before 2011. As a consequence, the Million Program rental stock finds itself in a completely new economic-legal environment and has been turned into an interesting object for profit-seeking (by both public and private companies). This is not only leading to increased displacement but also changing the nature of gentrification in a Nordic context from 'gentle' to 'brutal' (already mentioned in a different context by for example Clark, 2005; Larsen and Lund Hansen, 2008), and fits into a wider process of the neoliberalisation of the Swedish housing market (for overviews of this process, see for example Christophers, 2013; Hedin et al., 2012; Lind and Lundström, 2007).

Greg Dingizian, one of the more visible property developers in the city of Malmö, discerns a 'growing acceptance for apartments in higher price ranges' (Eklund, 2014) of late. His company Victoria Park has recently bought more than 3000 Million Program apartments in various cities in Sweden, including Rosengård, Malmö, which is arguably one of the most notorious Swedish neighbourhood marred by regular violent clashes between youngsters and the police. The 'acceptance' of higher rent levels seems to be absent, though. Dingizian maintains in an interview with a business magazine that 'what matters is to get rid of those who don't fit in'. Therefore, he believes that not only property owners but also the police and the social authorities should be involved in the renovation of Rosengård. There should be 'zero tolerance', and 'people should learn not to throw garbage through the window' (quoted in Grossman, 2013a). Around 100 tenants, suspected of illegal subletting, saw their contract suspended, and tensions have risen between remaining tenants and landlord representatives (Mikkelsen, 2013). Eight hundred sixty-seven Rosengård apartments were acquired for 3800 Swedish Kronor per square meter from a previous owner with financial difficulties. Dingizian summarises the rent gap as follows: he believes these apartments are worth 'twice as much', and, after renovation, 'at least 10 000 Swedish Kronor per square meter'. He has an outspoken opinion about the current (most often poor) tenants: 'In what other business can you find a situation where the client can halve the value [of your product]? That is when I realized that we need social measures to get forward' (Grossman, 2013a). In other words, tenants are blamed for lowering the value of the property through their alleged misbehaviour, and it is therefore only logical that they should be displaced (called 'social measures') in the name of profit-maximization. In the same interview, Dingizian even lays bare the direct relationship between higher rent levels and the share prices of his company: 'An increase of the value of the apartments by 1000 Swedish Kronor implies [an increase of] four Swedish Kronor per share'. Apartments in run-down neighbourhoods in Sweden have become the object of profit-seeking renovation works where the misbehaving existing tenant population is nothing but a nuisance that has to be removed, after which the Million Program becomes, so to speak, a 'brownfield site' waiting to be renewed and made profitable. Similarly, two businessmen recently started a new

development company, Gimmel, with a simple and straightforward business model according to the owners: ‘Buy Million Program, renovate when apartments are empty, buy material from China and then increase the rent. Now only [buying] objects are missing’ (Grossman, 2013b). An inventory of 11 ongoing renovation projects in cities across Sweden reveals that proposed or actual rent increases vary between 14% and 80%, with an average of 45% (Alla ska kunna bo kvar, 2015).

It should be clear from these examples how the Million Program, once designed to provide everyone with affordable housing within the Swedish spirit of welfare universalism, has acquired a totally new social and economic meaning. In other words, ‘housing policies in Sweden have made a long journey from being the cornerstone of the Swedish welfare model and welfare thinking to forming the base of “anti-welfare” policies’ (Baeten and Listerborn, 2015), seeking to actively steer away needy groups from attractive parts in the city. Renovation, sharp rent increases and subsequent displacement from formerly affordable rental apartments has become a profit strategy that necessitates a permanent housing crisis to keep up demand. Current displacement in a Swedish context, then, can be regarded as the direct consequence of private companies moving into low-end housing market segments for profit-seeking purposes. Next, we turn our attention to what concrete forms displacement pressure can take, and to what effects this pressure can have on affected people.

Displacement pressure

[D]isplacement affects many more than those actually displaced at any given moment. When a family sees its neighborhood changing dramatically, when all their friends are leaving, when stores are going out of business [...] then the pressure of displacement is already severe, and its actuality only a matter of time. Families under such circumstances may even move as soon as they can, rather than wait for the inevitable; they are displaced nonetheless. [...] We thus speak of the ‘pressure of displacement’ as affecting households beyond those actually currently displaced. It is certainly a significant part of the displacement problem. (Marcuse, 1985: 335)

It is clear from our research that the displacement pressure, initiated by profit-seeking ambitions of both public and private landlords, and followed by actual displacement or not, creates an overall sense of anxiety and insecurity, even though, paradoxically, landlords promise increased safety and security levels. The Million Program estates are usually associated with crime, violence and a lack of safety, which is invoked by landlords to justify renovation efforts.⁶ While the need for security measures features prominently in the justification of many renovation projects, in practice they often come down to physical changes as banal as changing the lighting in the stairwell or changing the doors to the storage room (see Westin, 2011). There exists an obvious contradiction between the landlords’ discursive promises of increased security and the renovation projects themselves, which, ironically, triggers all kinds of basic, unanswered questions about the security of the tenants’ rental contract and whether they will be able to stay put in the first place.

This deep sense of insecurity among residents has been observed in earlier research on large renovation projects (Johansson et al., 1988). Paradoxically, then, in the name of improving safety and reducing violence on the Million Program estates, the systemic violence of displacement, and tactics displaying a large degree of symbolic violence exerted by landlords, is imposed upon many of its inhabitants. Systemic violence is here

understood as violence inherent in a system: ‘not only direct physical violence, but also the subtler forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence’ (Žižek, 2009: 8). Systemic violence is ‘objective’ in the sense that it is not directly executed by subjects but operates anonymously, systemically and invisibly through the very way society is organised, as opposed to physical, or ‘subjective’, violence. Objective violence appears as neutral, normal, bereft of ideology, and is therefore, again in contrast with subjective violence, more difficult to locate or resist. Renovation, then, is presented as a normal technical and economic necessity, even an ecological opportunity to reduce energy consumption and emission levels. But it contains built-in systemic violence since it forces people to either accept increased rent levels or leave and live with all the physical and psychological disruption this entails. Displacement pressure is thus the result of systemic violence inherent in the seemingly neutral need for renovation.

A second form of objective violence is that of symbolic violence or violence imposed by language and discourse (Bourdieu and Ferguson, 2000; Žižek, 2009). Symbolic violence encompasses a decidedly disciplining element. In surrendering to and absorbing the hierarchies and structures of the social order, individuals, initially outraged, often end up blaming themselves for their precarious situation and suffering, thus re-rendering the symbolic violence back to a realm of invisibility (Bourdieu and Ferguson, 2000). Through language, discourse and interaction between powerful landlords and a much less powerful ‘society’ (the Rent Tribunal, the Tenants Union and local politicians), the symbolic violence normalizes and hegemonizes an order where tenants are left feeling powerless and being at fault themselves. In the case of tenants under displacement pressure, the symbolic violence is clearly visible in the interaction between landlords and tenants in shape of for instance ‘letters of approval’ which literally do not provide an option to disapprove, alongside subtler tactics of harassment and attempts to dismantle and render opposition impossible.

Based on three Swedish case studies, Axelsson (2013) has tried to distil an ideal type procedure used by landlords to initiate large-scale renovations and rent increases. This ideal type should be regarded as a good illustration of systemic violence through renovation. First, landlords mobilise a ‘divide and rule’ tactic by only contacting a small part of the households in the neighbourhood that will be renovated – those who are part of ‘Phase I’. In that way, they avoid negotiations with the entire population and potential organized resistance. Second, the ‘Phase I’ group will be put under maximum personal pressure to formally agree with the planned renovations if they want to stay put, so as to create a precedent for the rest of the neighbourhood. Third, landlords threaten from a very early stage with court action (at the Tenants Tribunal) if the tenants disagree with the planned renovations. Fourth, landlords spread the rumour that the vast majority is in favour of renovations, even if they have never surveyed the opinion of all tenants. We could add as a fifth tactic that landlords spread rumours about very high rent increases (in some cases up to 70%) so that, after negotiations, a 20% or 30% increase seems a reasonable compromise.

In the next section, we will illustrate some features of displacement pressure following major renovation works as they emerged from our interviews with tenants, and how this situation specifically triggers feelings of insecurity, worry and hopelessness. We focus on some examples of systemic and symbolic ‘renovation violence’, namely the legal requirement to seek the tenant’s consent with renovation through a letter of approval, the (ab)use of the Rent Tribunal, the invocation of ‘stepwise rent increases’. What characterizes all of these examples is their seemingly benign appearance as they are framed as tenant-friendly measures or procedures.

Systemic and symbolic renovation violence

The letter of approval – An instrument to force consent

Renovation legally requires the tenant's prior consent through an official letter of approval. This arrangement may appear democratic since the tenant is apparently given the opportunity to agree or not with the renovation plans. However, it is clear from our interviews that the approval letter does not present any real choice – rather it sustains and hides an undemocratic reality. A representative of the Tenants Union says: 'The impression I got when I was in contact with the tenants, when we asked if they had signed the approval letter, the answer we got was "yes, I had no choice".' He continues: 'Sure, the landlord received approval from all tenants, but under circumstances that are not quite right. I mean, there's a difference between telling someone "would you please sign this form, this is what we intend to do in your apartment, we need your approval, go through this information and consider it before you sign" and saying to someone "Hey, just a formality; sign here, please"' (Interlocutor, 2011).

The discrepancy between rhetoric and reality can be illustrated by looking closer at the Swedish Association of Public Housing Companies' (SABO, 2009) brochure 'Renovation on the tenants' terms and conditions'. The title speaks for itself and the preface underlines that the landlord may carry out renovation measures that lead to an increase in standard and thus in rent 'only if the measures have been approved by the tenant' (p. 3). The contrast between these benign intentions and the threatening tone of the actual approval letter is striking:

Between [insert date] and [insert date], this property will be rebuilt. The measures that will affect you can be viewed in the attached rebuilding plan. In order to implement the measures, according to the Rent Act, we need your approval. We therefore encourage you to sign this form, so that we can implement the actions planned. [...] If for some reason you do not want to approve the planned actions, we ask you to contact us for further discussion. If we still do not agree, we – your landlord – have the opportunity to appeal to the Rent Tribunal with a request that they authorize us to take action anyway. (SABO, 2009: 40)

The phrasing in this letter leaves little room for possibility of choice. And between the words in the last sentence one can detect a hidden threat: measures will be taken 'anyway'; displaying a veiled form of (symbolic) violence in the very wording and discursive structure of the letter.

Moreover, as we have learned from the study, the very name – approval letter – leaves no sense of the possibility of refusing the actual renovation; only approval is allowed; a 'no' box does not appear on the approval letter. Or as one tenant puts it: 'it's like a North-Korean democracy'. The only option for a tenant to disapprove of the renovation plans is to throw away the approval request letter – which will be countered with systematic reminders, as one interlocutor points out:

We received three letters: are you going to approve or not? We did not sign any of them [...] Then the case was sent to the Tenants Tribunal and they decided that the landlord had the right to carry out the renovation plans. Before that, we were contacted by the landlord who talked about how they usually win in court. But you know, if they had said from the beginning that this is going to happen anyway, that we have nothing to say, then we had not protested as much. But it *sounds* like we have influence, that we may decide. (Interlocutor, 2011)

Some tenants have experienced a great deal of pressure from the landlords to sign the approval letter:

they started to call, and people got worried and afraid [. . .]. Eventually I got a letter saying that only if I sign would I get ahead of the housing queue and have a chance to get a new apartment. I got scared. I'm alone, my son has just moved out. Where would I go if they forced me out? So I signed the letter.

The problems we are highlighting here are seldom recognized or spoken about; the subjective nature of harassment experiences is notoriously difficult to put into words, not to mention to prove, and makes displacement pressure hard to cope with, let alone combat. From our interview material, we judge that the problem of harassment of tenants who oppose renovation plans is standard practice.

The Rent Tribunal – A mockery of justice

Throughout the interviews we learned that the idea that ‘the tenant always loses’ is widespread across different actors involved in a renovation process. Although words like ‘always’ and ‘never’ are exaggerations, this generalization is rooted in reality. Statistics of the Rent Tribunal in Stockholm from the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 show that in cases where the landlord wants to carry on with renovation plans, despite the tenant’s refusal, a majority turn out in favour of the landlord: 96% for 2008, 76% for 2009 and 91% in 2010. It is common that cases are simply written off when tenants, aware of the impossibility to win the court case, decide to sign the approval letter at the last minute (also Westin, 2011). A former employee of the Rent Tribunal explains that tenants

feel they want to take the fight, but eventually realize that their protest will lead to a court hearing, a hearing where they will be standing alone against a host of lawyers and representatives of the landlord. This realization most often leads to the tenants giving up. (Interlocutor, 2015)

This puts the tenant in a more or less completely powerless position, facing a defeatist road towards displacement:

The landlords most often get their request approved when they want to carry out extensive renovation measures, even if the tenants don’t approve. The Rent Tribunal trusts the landlords to account for how much renovation is needed. According to our lawyer and architect we lose 98-99% of all cases. [The Rent Tribunal] considers itself not competent of assessing what level of renovation is necessary for the property in question, if the property needs extensive rebuilding in all spaces or not. (Tenants Union Representative, 2014)

The composition of the Rent Tribunal is in itself noteworthy: a chairman and a tenants’ and landlords’ representative, respectively. While seemingly democratic and fair, this composition could be problematic when technical issues of renovation are debated. The landlords’ representative is usually a property owner and landlord herself – with good insight into renovation processes. The tenants’ representative is usually represented by a senior member of the Tenants Union who has no formal expertise regarding the technical issues of renovation and estate management. A former employee at the Rent Tribunal explains the non-standardized selection of tenant representatives: ‘those are the ones with spare time on their hands. We have a list of people we can call in. Most of them [the tenant

representatives] are senior citizens and glad to contribute' (Interlocutor, 2015). The result is that the technical aspects and inquiry (what degree of renovation that is justified under the circumstances at hand) is analysed and solely represented by a tribunal member with vested interests on the side of landlords. There might be cause to question this one-sidedness of the technical analysis, and to investigate potential bias.

Stepwise rent increase

A gradual increase in rent after renovation, with annual rental discounts during a three to five-year period, is often depicted (not only by property owners but also by the Tenants Union) as a tenant-friendly principle, and as support or protection for tenants facing a sharp rent increase after renovation. A real estate economist writes:

Since it is costly and cumbersome to move, especially if it has to happen quickly, a protection for tenants in these situations is necessary. If the tenant is given more time, chances increase that she will find a relatively good alternative or perhaps even increase her income to be able to afford to stay. (Lind, 1996: 84)

The tenants' stories problematize this picture. While it may be better to spread the increase in rent over a few years than having to pay a shock rent increase from day one, this 'protection' is not so much a protection but a prolonged displacement, or displacement pressure extended in time. One tenant suspects that the stepwise increase is a deliberate tactic of the landlord to avoid remarkable relocation statistics: 'if people stay a year or two or three it won't look so bad. They can claim the moves to have nothing to do with the renovations' (Interlocutor, 2014). Another tenant explains her economic situation: 'in two years the rent will be such that we'll have to go hand in hand [to the social welfare office or to a new neighbourhood]' and adds that 'the stepwise rent increase is bogus, it would be better if they were honest and did it all at once' (Interlocutor, 2016).

Furthermore, it is often assumed by the landlord that the tenant during a period of a few years 'can increase her income'. But a tenant on disability benefits disagrees:

You see a lot of people who have moved here, to these newly renovated apartments. But a lot of people have probably left the neighbourhood, because of the increased rent. Those of us who stay get a piecewise increase in rent during five years, which I am against. That's just ridiculous, I told them so. First I will go through the trouble of evacuating, then the trouble of moving back, and then I will only be able to afford to stay for two years before I have to find another place to live that I can afford. So I will have to move anyway! So that's just ridiculous! During those five years you are supposed to find a well-paid job, to change your financial situation. My situation is not going to change! And all retirees, women with low pensions... (Interlocutor, 2011)

Instead of being a protection, gradual rent increases function may cast favourable light on the property owner, who claims it is for the tenants' best, while gradual rent increase actually protects the landlord: 'It may be problematic for the company if many tenants move at the same time, so the company might give the tenants a five-year period to achieve the long-term rent' (Lind and Lundström, 2009: 22).

It should also be added that even if we were to consider gradual rent increase as a protection for the individual tenant in question, it does not protect society against residential segregation. The possibility to get the rent increase extended over time only applies to those who already have a contract, not to those who sign a new one after the renovation has been done. Thus, it is no protection against gentrification; it merely postpones displacement of low-income groups.

Neutralizing disagreement

The uneven power relations between various actors on the housing market are particularly apparent in the renovation projects in our study. While this is unsurprising and unspectacular in itself, it is somewhat more spectacular how landlords capitalize more directly and strategically from this unevenness. Within the confines of the unique use-value system of the Swedish rental sector, rents are negotiated between landlords and the local Tenants Union branch. While this should be (and often is) a security and source of empowerment for tenants, the Tenants Union is increasingly rendered powerless when negotiations strand. With stranded negotiations the landlord is free to negotiate directly with the tenants – and if in disagreement the dispute is to be settled at the Rent Tribunal. A representative from the tenant organization elaborates: ‘we can’t push too hard everywhere, we have to negotiate with the same landlord over and over again and good relations are important’ (Interlocutor, 2015). The need for ‘good relations’ is much an effect of a deep leverage disparity. While the landlord can appeal to the Rent Tribunal (at low risk, as illustrated above), the tenant organization has no practical measures they can take to the negotiation table. In effect some tenants get sacrificed over others, with the Tenants Union agreeing high rent increases in one area, in order to gain a better negotiation position for the next neighbourhood in line for renovations.

The organizational structure of the Tenants Union is such that some local chapters can be as small as individual neighbourhoods, which can result in clashes between the local and municipal level. A local member and tenant recounts how her interest as a tenant trying to create awareness in media and press after 52% rent increases were announced in her neighbourhood clashed with the municipal office;

we had printed information pamphlets about an arranged and upcoming meeting with [the landlord], but when my husband went to pick them up the chairman refused to give them to us. He said ‘surely you must understand this would happen when you talk to the press and cause a scene. [The landlord] will never show up at your meeting’. (Interlocutor, 2015).

This example illustrates how powerless and how carefully the tenant organization have to navigate the field of negotiations – and how they despite being a lobby group paradoxically at times have to stay away from rousing public opinion.

Landlords seem to be well aware of this power discrepancy and use it in order to neutralize the possibility of disagreement. Landlords often refuse to deal with individual tenants or to answer basic questions about the renovations – referring to company policies or enclosed negotiations. A tenant in Uppsala says:

We used to be able to call. [Now] the only means of contact we have is a communication representative in Gothenburg. There is no one in Uppsala. That’s their policy. And she knows nothing! It’s terrible! She can’t answer the easiest of questions. (Interlocutor, 2014).

Other recounts how meetings have been cancelled last minute with reference to ‘policy’ and asks what policy that could be: ‘not to talk to tenants?’ (Interlocutor, 2015). Others how when they show up they act arrogantly or just seem disinterested. A commonality among several of the respondents in our study is the hardship and work required trying to get basic questions answered, or to even reach the landlords at all. These difficulties generate feelings of not being in control of one’s life. Feelings that have a direct and adverse effect on the well-being of tenants.

Displacement pressure extended in time

Large-scale renovations are usually stretched out over time, and so is displacement. The anxieties and uncertainties among the respondents in our study can in several cases be traced back a decade or more, when renovation plans were first announced: ‘I’ve had this hanging over me almost from when I first moved in. That’s 12 years now. It’s not human! And we haven’t chosen this ourselves’ (Interlocutor, 2015). This strategy of temporal extension serves the displacement tactics in several ways. First it serves to obscure displacement itself. In the course of a decade-long renovation process, it is notoriously difficult to examine the reasons behind tenants’ relocation: are they leaving to prevent displacement later, or are there other reasons for tenants leaving the area? Our study shows that through announced rent increases years prior to the actual renovations many tenants have neighbours and friends moving out well before actual renovation in an attempt to avoid future rent increases. In this way, the number of displaced tenants is underestimated, much in similarity with the stepwise rent increase. Second, it allows for the gradual removal of potential disagreement. A common practice in the studied neighbourhoods is the use of so-called demolition contracts. These contracts are temporary and disallow new tenants from moving back in after the renovations, and consequently from taking part in the negotiations around the renovations. This practice creates an illusion of neighbourhood acceptance by effectively producing tenants without voice. Third, lengthy renovation projects exhaust tenants and produce the feeling that resistance is meaningless. One tenant expresses it as ‘banging your head against the wall’ (Interlocutor, 2014) and if it were not for the fact that she feared the same process would repeat itself to whatever neighbourhood she moved to she would have given up a long time ago.

The long time between announcement of renovation and actual renovation, in combination with ‘demolition contracts’, also pose the risk of producing both socially and materially barren neighbourhoods. One tenant says that

of around 300 households in this neighbourhood 200 are on demolition contracts [...] you don’t know your neighbours anymore, people move in and out very frequently [...] a lot of apartments are empty [...] it feels lonely and deserted here, some are afraid. (Interlocutor, 2014)

Increased security, often invoked by landlords as a beneficial outcome of the renovation project, is undermined by actual feelings of insecurity and fear in increasingly gloomy neighbourhoods. The neighbourhood is transforming not only materially, but also socially, well before the renovations have even begun. This loss of a sense of belonging has effectively rendered any ‘right to dwell’ obsolete. A tenant in Gränby who somewhat successfully managed to reduce her rent increase from 40% to 20% explains: ‘it doesn’t matter. Most have moved out already. I will move too. The neighbourhood isn’t the same’ (Interlocutor, 2015). The arsenal of displacement tactics and the long-lasting and violent displacement pressures utilized by landlords serves to displace tenants and reconfigure the neighbourhood, no matter the outcome of any (if any) mediation between tenant and landlord.

Conclusions

Most research on gentrifying neighbourhoods focuses on the experiences and motives of gentrifiers, landlords and developers, while there is surprisingly little research on and knowledge about the ‘dark side’ of neighbourhood change, namely displacement, displacement pressure and displaced people. This article has tried to alleviate this

knowledge gap through a qualitative case study of displacement (pressure) in the context of the large-scale renovation projects currently underway on the Swedish 'Million Program' estates of the 1960s and 1970s. We have argued that the normalisation of a profit-driven renovation strategy of the Million Program housing stock in Sweden produces severe displacement pressures for tenants, and that it challenges former Swedish public discourses centred around universal housing rights and 'good housing for all'. While displacement and other exclusionary processes on the housing market are by no means new, the current need for technical innovation of some 400,000 dwellings has been used by both public and private landlords to systematically implement 'social renovation' through sizeable rent increases. We have highlighted how landlords try to increase profits not only through rent increase but also through the sale of housing stock and the conversion of rental stock to tenant-owned stock. In the process, landlords deploy a variety of 'soft' tactics to minimise disagreement and to force tenants to comply with far-reaching renovations and (sometimes skyrocketing but always significant) rent increases. These soft tactics may be unspectacular in their own right but their impact on the tenants' fate is striking and therefore requires our close attention and investigation.

Tenants who initially refuse to sign the formally required 'Letter of Approval' before renovation starts are systematically put under severe pressure by the landlords through legal threats, personal harassment and reminders about the futility of resistance as proven by previous unsuccessful cases. Cases that are tried and the Rent Tribunal virtually always turn out in favour of the landlord who can then go ahead with renovations and rent increases. Forced compliance renders any attempt to insert renovation works into a democratic process obsolete. Further, tenants are often offered stepwise rent increases, and this is usually portrayed as a benign gesture from the landlord, but it actually serves the landlord's interest to avoid a sudden decrease in demand. Moreover, to spread out the displacement process over a number of years makes it difficult to prove causality between renovation and eviction, and it only adds to the extent and severity of displacement pressure, until displacement actually occurs. Scores of tenants will never be able to significantly and systematically increase their income to match significant and systematic rent increases, and this is especially true for tenants on retirement or benefit incomes.

Under the guise of 'technical necessity', we are actually witnessing a systemic disregard and marginalisation of the displaced by both landlords and representatives from the legal and institutional framework dealing with renovation. Displaced tenants seem to be regarded as collateral damage – to use a military term adopted by Bauman (2011) – in the process of making neighbourhoods and cities more 'attractive'. Democratic and judicial rights are often illusory – if not to say a mockery – and merely deepen the tenants' sense of powerlessness. Bereft of power and choice, many tenants in Sweden facing large-scale renovations and neighbourhood 'upgrading' risk traumatic and violent displacement pressures affecting their everyday lives. In some cases, this results in negative impacts on both physiological and psychological health, in line with previous and international research findings.

Considering the scope of and the continuous need for renovations of the Swedish housing stock in coming years, there is cause to call for a reflection around the 'right to dwell' and the status of 'home' in an increasingly commodified housing sector. The silent displacement drama currently unfolding in the renovated Million Program housing stock is ultimately the result not of technical necessity but of decades of deregulation policies that have given free hands to landlords to optimise profits, not housing provision. It puts a question mark behind Sweden's constitutional right to housing.⁷ Public housing provision *for all* was once the cornerstone of Sweden's much heralded welfare state and resulted in a housing construction rate between 1965 and 1974 that was unmatched in the world. Today, in

times of housing shortage in large cities, the (previously despised) housing stock of the Million Program has become a very interesting investment object that can be renovated to accommodate the middle classes and yield significant profits, after parts of the existing low-income population has been evicted. The Million Program, then one of the main vehicles to install universal welfare in Sweden, has now become one of the main vehicles to actively work against welfare.

Further research

This research project has focused on actual displacement mechanisms and processes following structural renovation works of the Million Program housing stock. Further research is needed on examples of structural renovation efforts without significant rent increases and displacement. Examples of more tenant-friendly renovation projects exist (Arbman, 2016). Why do some (public) housing companies decide not to finance renovation through rent increase, or only partly, and what alternative forms of financing do they make use of? What is the role of the tenants in this form of renovation?

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Notes

1. The exact number is unknown, since no nationwide register seem to exist. 40,000 is an estimate by a senior chief negotiator from the Tenants union, and based on the number of companies they negotiate rents with annually.
2. Including renovation of pipe systems, bathrooms and kitchens.
3. From 1 747 180 (1997) to 1 653 347 (2012) or a decrease of 5.4 pct
4. From 4 246 038 to 4 550 779 or an increase of 7.2 pct
5. Even in Stockholm, the (official) number of inhabitants per apartment has remained almost constant (from 1.9 in 1998 to 2.0 in 2010) (Stockholms Stad, 2014)
6. Although, in recent years, a more positive counter narrative has emerged (see Langhorst, 2013; Tunström, 2009; Wirtén, 2010).
7. Public power shall be exercised with respect for the equal worth of all and the liberty and dignity of the individual. The personal, economic and cultural welfare of the individual shall be fundamental aims of public activity. In particular, the public institutions shall secure the right to employment, housing and education, and shall promote social care and social security, as well as favourable conditions for good health. (The Constitution of Sweden, 2016: 65)

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