

**2nd. Report: Experience in the Professional International Exchange
Program between Norway, Mexico and Venezuela**

Housing programs in Sweden and Norway / Fredskorpset

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PRESENTATION

Leieboerforeningen and Fredskorpset had prepared some activities in order to find a big panorama about Norwegian culture in the frame of the professional exchange in we are involve, such as:

- Exhibition of new housing development in Sweden.
- Guide tour in Bergen.
- City Hall meeting about politic organization in Norway.
- Fredskorpset preparatory course.

During these activities we had discussed also about Housing Programs in Mexico and Venezuela, in which we had find some similarities in problems and solutions.

Above, some topics that would help us to understand the links between social aspects and the development of cities and countries, through our experience in Norway in our first month:

HOUSING PROGRAMS IN SWEDEN

International Union of Tenant Future houses in Sweden.

In the frame of a seminar between Scandinavian Tenants Associations held in Stockholm-Sweden there was an exhibition of future houses in Sweden. Here follows briefly what we experienced.

Facts about housing in Sweden

About 85 % of the population of Sweden live in urban areas, of which half lives in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. The owner occupation in private houses and villas is about the 60 %. In multi-dwelling blocks the occupation is about 40 %, of which 40 % are owned by public utility companies (non-profit), 30 % are owned by tenant owner's associations, and 30 % have got private landlords.

An average Swedish household spends an average of 30 % of the disposable income on costs for living; rent, heating and water and mortgage when owner occupied housing.

International Union of Tenant

"IUT is a Non Governmental Organisation, founded in 1926 in Zürich, Switzerland, with the purpose of safeguarding the interests of tenants. IUT is a non-party political organisation, working along democratic lines.

IUT considers housing as one of the fundamental rights in society, and therefore needs to be addressed locally, nationally and internationally. Adequate housing is also one of the safeguards for peace and security in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Homelessness is one of the ingredients for social exclusion". ([http:// www.iut.nu](http://www.iut.nu)).



Stockholm

Stockholm is a metropolis (800.000 inhabitants aprox.) where medieval, modern and contemporary places are mixed. Stockholm is called the Venice from the North. Nucleos Island is called Gamla Stan and is connected by bridges with the newest parts of the city.



New developments

Today there is housing development in the south-east of the city called Hämmerby. This area is developed by a private enterprise. The urban plan and the buildings were designed with ecological criteria.

This part of the city will have 8.000 dwellings for 20.000 people (2.5 people per house). And, the 20 % of the flats

will be rented.

The scale of the buildings is going according to the context. Each flat is approximately 120 sq. meters size. The first floor has studio apartments that are assessable to and from the street. These apartments could be used as ateliers and as shops. Each apartment has a garden where the dweller could also groom.

Mixed uses:

The project includes residence, community centres, church, parks, treatment plants for clean water, recycle plants for garbage, and public transportation. The urban design bridge the link between this development, the existing city and the sea through open spaces (wide pedestrians pads, lakes, parks).

Co-operation between private and public sector:

The project involves different interested parties: Community, Municipality, construction concerns, church, etc. For example the Trans rail and other roads are in charge of the municipality, under the big plan criteria. So, the city plan and the private plan increase the quality of the city and its inhabitants.

Ecological proposal:

The proposal is looking for a self-sustainable neighbourhood, with development in perspective and the goal between neighbourhoods. With open spaces, clean water, efficient public transportation, and with rules adapted into the existing system it is a 1:1 scale experiment.

Rental housing in the European Union percentage rental housing of total, 1998/1999.

	Total rental	Social	Source
Switzerland	70%	14%	1
Sweden	40%	22%public	2
Norway	22%	4%	3

¹Fig. 1

In conclusion, the frame shows that about 80% of all households own their own dwelling (**Landlords**).

20% of the households are tenants (**Co-operatives**)

4% is public rental housing (**Government**).

The 20% of rental sector belongs to individual or co-operatives form.

The Co-operatives were established in order to solve the housing problems that Norway had in the 1920's: to provide the workers with jobs and dwellings. In 1930 The Norwegian Workers Labour Party decided to leave the municipal, public housing and to adopt for the Co-operative housing as the main instrument for programs in social house building. Besides The Parliament, 3 years ago agreed that Government should finance a new non-commercial rental housing sector, and should be constructed. These dwellings are located in the biggest towns and the owners could be municipality, co-operatives or private landlords. They can decide whether or not the flats should be for youth, immigrants, refugees or others, who have economic problems.

There is a big question about Norwegian Government housing policies: ...”Is it possible in a free and capitalistic housing market to fulfil the aim of transforming all households into house-owners? At the same time it seems very difficult to reverse the development in favour of more rental dwellings without heavily state-subsidies. But a subsidy in fact, does not cope with the free and liberalistic housing politic that has developed the last 15 to 20 years...”²

¹ International Union of Tenants' Quarterly magazine. January 2002, page 5

² Aasen, Lars. The Norwegian Housing Model – success or failure?1995



Co-operative houses in Bergen.

Visit to Bergen, Oslo.

Bergen has approximately 250,000 inhabitants and is the second largest in populated city of Norway.



Panoramic View of Bergen.

Bergen is a port settlement that was formally declared the capital of Norway in 1240. Bergen nowadays is a centre for oil exploration, shipping and fishing but it has grown as a centre for environmental and oceanographic research in Norway. The future is brightening for "The Gateway to the Fjords".

We visited some of the neighbourhoods and how it is structured in order to get a dwelling. Some of these dwellings are overcrowded. They have no isolated material. Outside the house, are localised, bathrooms. Therefore in winter they have problems.

The government rent dwellings for homeless and also alcoholics and substance abusers (eg. drugs, etc.) in regular neighbourhoods in the city.

These scenarios stresses the importance for not creating "ghettos" for the less fortunate, therefore dwellings will be integrated with ordinary "normal" dwellings and they are located throughout the city.

Meeting with a member of the Socialist Left Party. Oslo. Norway.

Last August 21st we had a meeting in the City Hall in Oslo with one of the advisers of the Social Left Party of Norway in order to talk about the political issues and to have a general introduction about the Norwegian political system and the City Government in Oslo.

The Norwegian political system is a Constitutional Monarchy, which means that the monarchy is not absolute, the king is on top at the parliament but he doesn't have the power, is the National Assembly who takes all decisions. The king just has to sign the decisions taken by the National Assembly, and then the king is the head of the state, but only symbolically.

There are three branches of the government:

- Legislative (Parliament)
- Executive (government/ administration)
- Judiciary (courts of law)

There are three levels of government:

- State
- County
- Municipal

People elect the National Assembly as well as the City Parliament of the Oslo City in general elections every four years. There are local and national elections every two years, one local and other national. Is important to emphasise that people not decide at all the government position, they vote and then after the parties can do some alliances.

There are eight parties and one independent, where the majority belongs to the Labour party, which has be historically the most powerful.

The government has twelve Standing Committees: Energy and Environment; Family, Cultural Affairs and Governmental Administration; Finance and Economic Affairs; Defence; Justice; Education, Research and Church Affairs; Transport and Communication; Health and Social Affairs and the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Our central point in the meeting at the City Hall was to know how the local government in Oslo was conformed and how is its political organization in order to have a biggest perspective about the place we are working in.

Oslo is dividing in 25 local sectors. The City Government is composing for about 59 persons. Is important to say that most of people who work at the City Government have another job, is only few people who work full time. Persons whose work half time receive a salary enough to pay the "telephone bill", around 60000 NOK per year (6000 dollar.). Persons whose work is full time receive 500 000 NOK per year (50 000 dollar.)

There is a City Consul however the Assembly has most of the political power and if it doesn't like what the consul is doing they can fail him and the Assembly decides the next new consul.

The annual city budget is around 22 billion per year.

The city government has 6 committees: Health and Social Care; Urban Planning; Environment, Transport and Sports; Finance; Education and Culture; Districts and Elderly.

In this meeting we also have the chance to talk about our own countries and we expose a little about the political organization from Mexico and Venezuela, at the same time the advisor explain us that the Social Left Party has some exchange links with El Salvador and some other countries from Latin America.

After the meeting the member of the Socialist Left Party introduce us with the Urban Planning advisor with whom we agree to have one meeting around October or November. After this we had a guide visit all around the City Hall building, where is not only the city government, also the Nobel Price is given there every year.

It was very important because in one way we have more knowledge about how the social and political system works and by that way we open new expectations and we clarify some doubts about the Norwegian society.

Fredskorpset

Fredskorpset is a public body with special powers, answering to the Foreign Ministry. It shall perform its mission in an independent fashion. Important questions of principle that arise in the course of the work of Fredskorpset shall be laid before the Foreign Ministry for decision.

Fredskorpset shall help to implement the overarching objectives for Norway's co-operation with the developing countries: to contribute to permanent improvements in economic, social and political conditions for the people of developing countries. To this end, Fredskorpset shall work particularly to realise the objective of a more just world order based on fundamental human rights. Fredskorpset shall contribute to the creation of contact and co-operation between individuals, organisations and institutions in Norway and in the developing countries, based on solidarity, equality and reciprocity.

Vision of Fredskorpset:

The original Vision of Fredskorpset is:

- Lasting improvements of economic, social and political condition for people of developing countries.
- Realisation of basic human rights
- A just world.

The Vision that we proposed during the course:

"Equal International exchange to gain understanding and respect for different cultures and ways of life, to develop professional and personal skills all over the world".



Preparatory Course

The Preparatory Course started on August 26/2002 with 31 Participants from different places of the world as South Africa, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Mexico, Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador and Norway.

We have stayed three weeks in the Ås village, close to Oslo Downtown.

The first week we did our presentation to the staff and to all participants. We took about Fredskorpset's history and then, we started sharing inter cultural preparation and communication of different countries. At the end of the week we had a Council Meeting at SAS Scandinavia Hotel in Oslo down town.

The second week started with practical information and intercultural communication session.

The method that is used is based on participation and interaction with all of us. We usually start our lessons with theory of different topics as Values, Respects, Misunderstanding topics, tolerance, human rights, and intercultural communication; just like politics, economics and culture issues. We learned to use the P.L.A method (Participatory Learning and Action) when we went through activities and different forms of discussion play a core role.

The Third week each participant had a presentation of each country. We got new information and details of every country of the program.

We took a course in order to have our web page in the Fredskorpset's Home page. See on. www.fredskorpset.net, click on "meet a participant" and then click on "see the list of participants". Each participant has his/her web page and is free to write different topics and experiences during the exchange program.

The fourth and last week has very much information from North – South poverty and development.

Topics to think about

- The government in Norway is only one of the multiple parts that has to manage housing programs. So, the participation of the public sector is important to solve social issues.
- The principal task is to integrate different parts of the society instead of create ghettos.
- The community has a lot to do taking decisions that affects everyone and their environment.

Links

International Union of Tenant

www.iut.nu

Union of Tenant. Norway

www.leieboerforeningen.no

Union of Tenant. Sweden

www.hyresgastforeningen.se

Information about Norway

www.odin.dep.no

Fredskorpset

www.fredskorpset.net

Contacts

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- [Elisabet Lönnqren](#) President in IUT, International Union of Tenants, Sweden.