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BLÅ TAKET 1:1 WRITING FROM A CONSTRUCTION SITE

Joanna Zawieja, Ylva K Rosvall, Anna Högberg, and Sofia Wiberg

The *modus operandi* for Blå Taket 1:1 is the practice of testing in 1:1. As our work proceeds, future situations will be tested at full scale on site, interior and exterior to the building. This method allows us to develop our proposal as founded upon and in direct connection to the existing context and the ongoing activities. The tests link onto the programme of Konsthall C and create a spatial displacement of its events.

With varying degrees of openness to the public, we explore the conditions for a situation-dependent dialogue by use of tools that test, discuss, and communicate spatial proposals directly on site. We consider the project as an enfolding process, weaving between drawing and testing, where outcomes from each mode influence the other. The method serves as a means of going beyond the conventions of architectural representation to set forth opportunities for a broader conversation about the role and means of the architect.

Test #1: The Entrance

The entrance is temporarily moved due to a rebuilding test. Konsthall C can be reached via Cigarrvägen 16.

There are four of us in the working team. This is our first formalized collaboration. Previously, we've moved in circles around each other's disciplines, followed related tracks, approached the same questions with different means. In this ongoing project we test holding these conversations together. Otherwise, the work of Anna Högberg is that of an artist, of Sofia Wiberg a political scientist. Ylva K Rosvall and Joanna Zawieja work as architects.

The work is carried out in Blå Taket (The Blue Roof), a property from 1949 designed by the architect David Helldén and located in the Stockholm suburb of Hökarängen. The building was originally made to house a boiler room and a central laundry for the local inhabitants. Parts of the laundry have been refurbished and are still in use, the other part has been transformed into an art centre: Konsthall C. There are workshops, community spaces, artist studios, and a youth centre in the building, too. It's surrounded by housing, predominantly rental dwellings. There are a couple of food stores in the vicinity, as well as pizza places, a hardware store, and a pharmacy—and an increasing number of artist studios.

Two organizations commissioned this assignment: the public housing company Stockholmshem and Konsthall C itself. Konsthall C was founded in 2004 as an art project by the artist Per Hasselberg in collaboration with the Neighbourhood Council (Stadsdelsrådet), an umbrella organization for various associations in the area. While we're working with this project, the art centre is run by the curator Kim Einarsson. The set-



ting of Konsthall C has an important influence on its activities. Located in half of what used to be a central laundry, the idea of a shared common space serves as the basis for the art centre's programme, focusing on issues such as the construction of society, utopia, community, and democracy.

The housing company, Stockholmshem, owns a large number of properties in Hökarängen, including Blå Taket. Within the framework of the project called Sustainable Hökarängen, Stockholmshem are currently investing in artistic activities in the area with the aim of creating "a more lively neighbourhood." One of the strategies is to make premises available for rent as artist studios. As written into the contract, artists are encouraged to address the public by creating open studios, workshops, or shopping opportunities. Stockholmshem wants Blå Taket to function as a node for this development.

The assignment, as put to us by Konsthall C, is to develop a concept for Blå Taket in accordance with the aims of Stockholmshem. It entails developing a proposal for altering the property in view of improving connections between the various activities in the building. We are also asked to improve the orientation in the area by clarifying the pedestrian route between Blå Taket and the centre of Hökarängen. In responding to these requirements, our work must also be founded in a dialogue with local stakeholders.



Test #2: The Lift

An important aspect of the alterations to come is that of accessibility. Up to now, the use of Blå Taket has been relatively informal. Access to the building has not been safeguarded, rental contracts are loose, and the fireproof divisions within the building are unclear. The building is now to be regulated. There are ongoing plans for inserting a lift in the central stairway. It feeds off the art institution's spaces and gives rise to narrow nooks.

We arranged the chairs as in a waiting room. Ten steady chairs, side by side, joined up with plastic strips. Ten more behind them, back to back. This was to be the reading room for the evening. We'd spent two days cleaning up, moving industrial shelving, sorting out cans of leftover paint. Now, the art centre's entire stock of tools and building materials had been brought into strict formation in an attempt to visualize the volume that presumably would be taken up by the lift. As a reading room, it was austere, but clean. When the evening finally took place, events took a different turn. The artist turned out to have many friends. The opening became a party, the space a dance floor, the chairs ended up in the middle. We've now decided to move the reading room out from the office.

I encounter a place intellectually as well as with the experiences I carry in my body. How is it possible to occupy other positions and adopt different perspectives? How can I understand the needs on site? Analysing a site always pre-supposes a position of subjectivity: If I'm a child I see the playground, if I'm elderly I might see the edges on the pavement, if I'm a driver I see the availability of parking space. There are bodies and histories, no blank slates.



Test #3: The Conversation Room

What is a dialogue? When do dialogues entail a real handing over of power, and when are they just varnish over ready-made deals? Do local residents have the responsibility to increase the attraction of their neighbourhood?

In Blå Taket 1:1, dialogues are turned into tests. Working on site, taking part in public events and in the tests themselves, we are able to observe how other users respond to them, to collect knowledge about the building and its varying activities. Do we also have the ability to establish a direct connection between the outcomes of tests and design decisions? In a wide sense, perhaps. We prefer to say that we are mangling the site, inhabiting it, becoming part of its activities. The process generates the proposals that are now taking shape.

We hold conversations, too—meeting people in the laundry, in the art centre, at meetings, over lunch. Initially, we were under the impression that we ought to talk to the local artists. They were not so eager, however, and questioned why they were expected to get involved in the touch-up of the neighbourhood. When we asked how they looked upon themselves in view of the gentrification process, they put the same question to us.

So how do we look upon our roles in this assignment? We've now been testing situations for six months, and certain issues have grown clearer than others. How does the current development in the neighbourhood affect the residents, those living in Hökarängen today? What is the significance of the artists? What are the implications of Konsthall C serving as a node for this sort of urban development that, in all probability, entails a process of gentrification? If our commissioners truly wish for a Sustainable Hökarängen, what would that imply, and how may our proposal support it?

In playing an active part in this development we are keen to explore the space of opportunity that emanates from the assignment. Our presence and method serve as means to understand a larger context. We sense the rise of a local conflict in that some residents feel overlooked by the property owners in this venture. It has made us think about how we can initiate a process geared towards long-term sustainability through a well-founded organization that gathers and supports local engagement. We are also pondering ways to strengthen Blå Taket in its service as a community centre. Running tests in full scale on site, we adopt the agency of construction workers. By sketching and drawing, the fortunes and misfortunes of the tests are translated into different kinds of acts: physical, conceptual, and social proposals.



Test #4: The Kitchen

We have been designing for a couple of years, occasionally also building. We have drafted bidding documents and construction plans. We have been paid on the basis of our rationalism and efficiency. We have kept our hands clean. At this point we are wondering what we have actually been drawing. Instructions for building? Legal documents? Abstract visions? Protocols of decisions taken? If we were to think of architecture as a dynamic materialization of social relations, rather than of an autonomous object, would it change the way we draw? Would we still be drawing? Does work, conflicts, or dilapidation translate into drawings? The steps are oiled until their texture resembles the hands that oiled them.

Who is the architect without a drawing?

We're testing a common kitchen in the art centre. The exhibition is smaller this time, allowing more space for the kitchen. We move in discarded outdoor furniture and demolish part of the wall between the art centre and the laundry. Instead of a compact wall, the spaces are now divided by a big sheet of milky glass. A new space appears running across the building. Looking from within the art space, the laundry users emerge like shadows and the park on the exterior is mirrored and shines through. The new kitchen welcomes people at openings, collects smaller groups for shared activities and larger ones for lectures. It's a room that's been lacking in the art centre.



Test #5: The Common Room

We have repeated meetings with Stockholmshem. Time and time again, we put forward the idea of a common room, one that belongs to the entire building, like an indoor park. Time and time again, the housing company reminds us that there is no such thing. Who will maintain it? Who will keep it tidy?

There is a beautiful room next to the laundry that is usually empty. We furnish it and convince a couple of teenagers from the area to use it, one Saturday in June, for selling homemade pastry. We put pictures on the walls from Hökarängen's archive—a collection of documents on Hökarängen and its history, currently housed in the art centre—and discuss the possibility of relocating the archive to here.



Test #6: The Park

Next to the laundry, southward facing, is a large park with a playground and a wading pool. The difference in height between the laundry and the ground is more than two metres, and there is no entry facing this way. We'd like to build a physical connection between the laundry and the park, with a stairway facing the sun a stone's throw from the swings. The art centre might move out here sometimes. But the building is historically listed, and in anticipation of an extended wait for a building permit we decide to build a temporary staircase directed towards the park. It establishes a new movement around the building. We're allowed to keep it until September, then it must come down. The kitchen garden that we've planted nearby is allowed to remain.

Working at full scale takes time. That's one of the assets, also in terms of making a statement on efficiency, in general, and on utility, in particular. We have weaved our tests, have built onto traces and remnants left by others who have spent time here or simply passed through in the past. Building our collaboration also takes time. It feeds our knowledge.

Test #7: The Way

The carpentry workshop in the cellar provides us with stakes that we mark with blue construction paint. We skewer them into the ground at strategic points, serving as means of orientation for visitors finding their way to Blå Taket. One path leads from the southern entry of the underground station, the other from the neighbourhood centre. It's difficult to explain the way in words. A few weeks later there are several stakes missing. We find some of them thrown next to the skewered holes. We'll try again later this autumn, and this time it will say Blå Taket on the signs. The stakes will point towards the park, the building, the laundry and the common space, not just towards Konsthall C.

Proposal acts

Three different kinds of acts are now taking shape. Three kinds of building activities encompass a social structure in parallel to a physical one: a proposal for the physical refurbishment, a proposal for an alternative studio contract emphasising longevity and artistic integrity, and a proposal for an organizational structure that brings different stakeholders together who share an engagement for the area—artists, small-scale business owners, and other local actors. We see no need to separate the artists' engagement from that of others in Hökarängen.

The proposal we are developing for the physical refurbishment of Blå Taket draws on our full-scale tests in two ways: by elaborating some of the carried out tests and translating them into the refurbishment proposal, and by developing a spatial proposal that enables the full-scale tests to continue within the art space after the refurbishment has taken place. For instance, the test of a common kitchen has made it into the proposal: the future main entrance to Konsthall C will be through a kitchen with counters, a large table, shelves, and coffee. Hökarängen's archive, in turn, will be relocated to the previously mentioned "common room," though now this room will fall under the responsibility of Konsthall C. A new entrance is proposed—from the laundry, through the window, towards the park—while the two existing ones are altered. Now there will be three entrances into Konsthall C, each one linking it to Hökarängen through a semi-public space: a kitchen, an enlarged stairwell, and an archive with stairs leading to a park. These entry halls, spaces between an entrance and the art space, can be cut off from Konsthall C and used separately, thus the art space can shrink and grow.

We see these varied entrances and their adjacent, potentially separated, entry halls as a continuation of our tests. Three ways to enter Konsthall C, three ways to exit.