This course seeks to explore in what ways the Nordic and European housing markets are assuming a dysfunctional state, and what politics and policies can be implemented to solve this. In northern Europe, the acute housing shortage is a fact, while southern European countries are facing a systematic wave of foreclosures and evictions in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Meanwhile, housing prices and rent levels in major urban centres are skyrocketing, and throughout Europe ever larger chunks of affordable rental stock are systematically bought, renovated and put back on the market at significantly higher prices. The increasing shortage of affordable (rental) accommodation leads to acute housing problems for low-income families, young people, single parents, old people, and immigrants with a weak economy, even though many international declarations and national constitutions guarantee the right to housing. The housing market appears to be characterized by a classic implementation deficit: everybody agrees that a healthy housing market is a vital component of a well-functioning city, but nobody appears to know how to achieve such an outcome through planning or other social processes. Meanwhile, developers, landlords and the real estate sector call for yet another round of deregulation to stimulate the housing market, while people have started to organize themselves to resist evictions and fight renovation projects. The course investigates economic, political and social perspectives on the global housing crisis, and it emphasises alternative strategies for housing. This will be pursued through three sessions of two to three days in Uppsala, Lund and Malmö with lectures, seminars and excursions to places where ‘the housing question’ becomes very visible.

The course is open to all students interested in urban questions and in particular housing questions.

1. Housing crisis (Uppsala) (7-8 April 2016)

Key themes: global housing crisis; racialised and gendered housing markets, political economy of housing, renviction, movements

Lecturers: Irene Molina, Brett Christophers, Sara Westin

Guest lecturer: Manuel B. Aalbers (Geography, Leuven)

Excursion: renovation and eviction in Gränby
2. Housing precariat (Malmö) (28-29 April 2016)

Key themes: housing inequalities, public housing, displacement, housing stories
Lecturers: Carina Listerborn, Guy Baeten, Stig Westerdahl
Guest lecturer: Kirsteen Paton (Sociology and Social Policy, Leeds)
Excursion: wealthy housing areas (Bellevue, Victoria Park)

3. Housing justice (Lund) (1-3 June 2016)

Key themes: housing justice, housing commons, use and exchange value
Lecturers: Anders Lund Hansen, Henrik Gutzon Larsen
Guest lecturer: Stuart Hodkinson (Geography, Leeds)
Excursion: gentrification in Copenhagen

Examination: Participation in seminars and excursions; an essay (circa 15 pages)

Literature: circa 1200 pages

Preliminary literature examples:

Allen, C (2008), Housing market renewal and social class, Routledge