

**HI!**



Maybe you have noticed that finding a decent and affordable place to live is quite hard. If you haven't noticed, it probably is because you already have a good place to live in.

Then you are one of the lucky ones! Because access to affordable housing is becoming harder all around Europe

WE WILL NOW TRY TO GET AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION:

**WHY IS IT SO DAMN  
HARD TO ACCESS  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
FOR MORE AND MORE  
PEOPLE?!?**

To answer this, we need to understand the basic logic of the society we live in.

we live in a

# CAPITALIST

society

the main idea is to (try to) make profit.



CAPITALIST SOCIETIES WORKED IN DIFFERENT WAYS:

Until the 80s/90s the provision of housing was considered a responsibility of the State

But ever since then, the market has been given a bigger role as provider of housing.

The belief was that the free market would solve the housing question. If the market wouldn't be interrupted, there would be enough housing for everyone, the living standards would be higher and life generally better.

**All over Europe the winds of Neoliberalism were blowing...**



Let's have a closer look at this thing called **NEOLIBERALISM**

The idea behind neoliberalism is **FREEDOM**  
Sounds nice, right?

In theory it is.  
It's hard to argue against freedom.  
When politicians and companies suggest a solution for the housing issue, an important question to ask is:

**FOR WHOM?**



(this comic will have a lot of text, but we want you to remember this question)

"But now the time of collectivism has come to an end. [...] We strive to make the 1990s a decennium of change and renewal for Sweden."



Carl Bildt,  
Swedish Prime Minister, 1991-1994,  
October 4, 1991

"If a Tory does not believe that private property is one of the main bulwarks of individual freedom, then he had better become a socialist and have done with it."



Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of Great Britain, 1979-1990  
January 30, 1975

These politicians really wanted to leave more power to the market, calling it "individual freedom".

The idea of a free market is that the State should 'retreat' from it, deregulate it and leave it more privatized. The thought is that the 'market will balance itself'



BUUUUUUUUT: does it really work like this?

let's ask housing researcher M. Grander!



"Housing is not something the market can fix by itself. [...] And there is an increased idea that the market is sufficient to provide housing for all groups, which we know now, it can not."

we will now explain to you why leaving it to the market doesn't work...



**but why is it a problem that housing is on the market?**

Well, not everyone can access the market!  
But housing is a basic need for everybody.



The demand will always be there.  
Especially when the urban population is growing.

It is not a choice to say  
"It's too expensive, I will skip it"

**BUT THERE IS NO PLAN B FOR NOT HAVING A HOME**

**HOUSING IS A  
NECESSITY!**

(This is why the conditions of the housing market are different than other markets.)

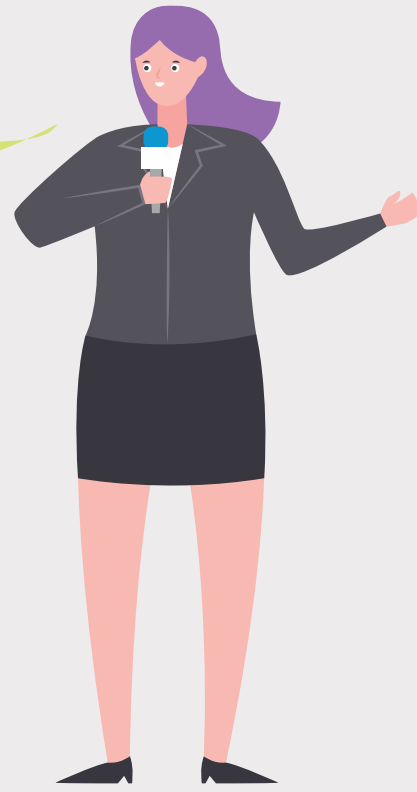
Let's ask an economist about this!!



The housing market is not like any other market. The state needs to be there, to make sure to build when the market does not want to build. Private companies will always stop building before the housing shortage is solved, because they don't want to risk economic loss. [...] We have a shortage of affordable housing because we have built too little and too expensive. We have to have policies so that everyone can afford housing. The state needs to help. We have to collectively finance it so that there will be enough housing.

M. Hofverberg, Chief Economist,  
Swedish Union of Tenants

Let's take a look at the stakeholders in the housing market and their interests:



THERE'S THE...

**HOUSING COMPANIES !**

and the...

**CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES !**

but then there's also the...

**STATE !** and the...

**MUNICIPALITIES !**

aaaand then there's the...

**BANKS !**



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They all have something in common:

They need to make a profit (and will always try to).



But there is one last stakeholder in the housing market:

**YOU ! YOU ! YOU !**

and your interest is  
to find a place to live  
(without getting ripped off)



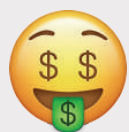
In this conflict of interests, who do you think has the biggest power? The ones in need of housing, or the ones trying to make a profit?



Powerful stakeholders know that people will always be in need of housing.

They know that we will always make more and more sacrifices to be able to afford a home.

That is why they will make sure to profit out of your needs



be sure to remember their interest!

but **HOW** is this happening?



In the next pages, we will show you some examples of how it works...



WELCOME TO:

# TENDENCIES IN THE NEOLIBERAL HOUSING MARKET

Part 1

## PUSH TOWARDS HOMEOWNERSHIP

An effect of neoliberalism  
is the following:



Instead of the State being responsible for providing good rental housing, people are pushed to buy their homes.

This has happened for many reasons:

1.

As a way to control the population. If the workers of a nation own their homes, they are less likely to oppose the system. Both because they are happier with their situation, but also because then they have something to lose.\*

2.

Also, when you have a mortgage to pay, you will go up and go to work every day, and be obedient.\*\*



\* This was a strategy in South European countries during fascist dictatorship, and in the UK during Thatcher.

\*\* In Sweden personal debt increased xx% the last XX years, while the states debt has fallen with XX%. In this way, the economic risk in when there is a financial crisis will be on the people, not the state



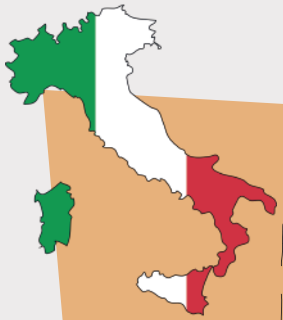
# TENDENCIES IN THE NEOLIBERAL HOUSING MARKET

## Part 2

### INCREASED RENTS

If you can not afford to buy your home, you will have to rent.

Depending on the regulation of your countries' rental sector, renting could lead to a pleasant or an unpleasant life situation.



For example, In Italy and many other countries, there are less regulations in the rental market, and instead, the market decides the rent. In Italy rental contracts are renewed every four years. This means that the landlord can kick you out, or raise the rent as much as they want.

This has not always been the case in Italy. there used to be rental control. But since the protection was low for the tenants, the landlords could exploit the tenants' weak situation and rent out on the black market for higher prices.

In 1998 rental control was abolished.

Researcher T. Poggio explains that this simply meant making illegal exploitation legal:



What was called the "black market" under rent control is now, when the rental system is liberalized, called the "free market"

# TENDENCIES IN THE NEOLIBERAL HOUSING MARKET

## Part 2

### INCREASED RENTS

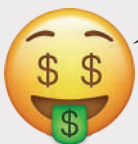


On the other hand in Sweden the system is still safe for many renters. Thanks to a strong tenants union, rents are kind of regulated, so that they will be stable and affordable over time. Also, the rental contracts do not have a time limit. This means that you can stay in your rental apartment as long as you wish.

But remember the different stakeholders, in Sweden they also have the same interest: **PROFIT**

Housing companies are using the loophole of forced renovations to raise rents and push away tenants who can not afford this.

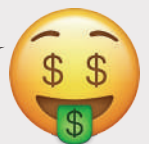
Many politicians and other stakeholders are suggesting that letting the market decide rents (which means: higher prices) would have positive results, because it would lead to more housing construction.



Higher rents!

But then less people would be able to afford it!  
(this brings us to the next point...)

More freedom  
for landlords!



The argument is freedom, but it actually means that the profit making of housing companies is more important than the safety of the tenants.



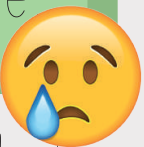
# TENDENCIES IN THE NEOLIBERAL HOUSING MARKET

## Part 3

### APARTMENTS ARE BUILT FOR HIGH INCOME HOUSEHOLDS



Both cities and housing companies want to attract high-income households. The municipalities want taxpayers, housing companies want the rents to be as high as possible and the construction companies want to sell at the highest price possible. All this means that new dwellings are built for the upper-middle class. That's why it is difficult to find a newly built home for groups with lower income.



For those who can not afford buying or renting in the normal market, many countries have the option of social housing. That is when the State or municipality provides housing for low-income households at a lower price.

BUUUUT: all over Europe the share of social housing has been decreasing more and more. The trend is to sell the public housing stock to private companies (that will make profit) leaving fewer affordable apartments to low-income households.



buying public housing...  
making profit! 👍



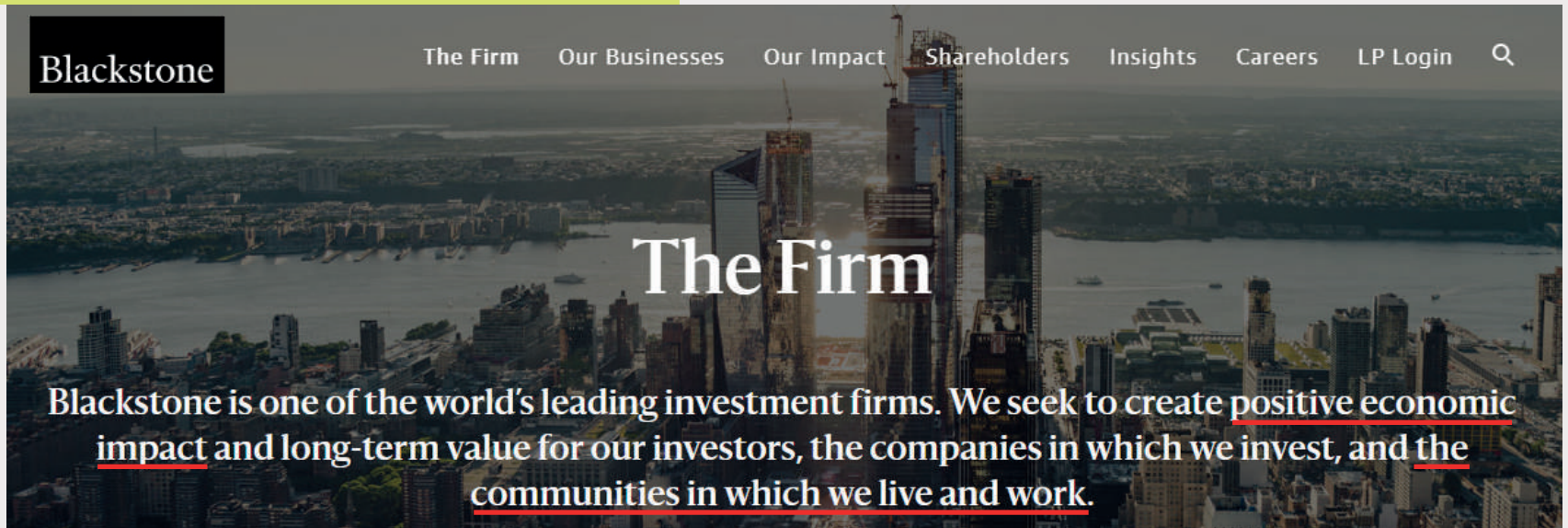


For example, they sell it to international private equity firms

... like Blackstone\*

\*(a multinational firm based in Manhattan)

This is what it says on their website:



SOUNDS NICE, RIGHT?!?

But what is actually happening?

**Tenants 'forced out their homes' by global investment firms, say UN experts**  
UN News/Ana Carmo | Manhattan, New York. 26 March 2019 | Human Rights



**U.N. blasts Blackstone Group for worsening the U.S. housing crisis**

BY IRINA IVANOVA  
MARCH 26, 2019 / 5:46 PM / MONEYWATCH

**UN accuses Blackstone Group of contributing to global housing crisis**

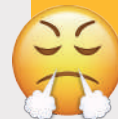
World's largest corporate residential landlords called out for their practices of inflating rents and 'aggressive evictions'

**Warren Calls Out Blackstone for 'Shameless' Profits From Housing**

By [Misyrilena Egkolfopoulou](#) and [Heather Perlberg](#)

November 18, 2019, 7:56 PM GMT+1 Updated on November 18, 2019, 9:56 PM GMT+1

Blackstone it's exploiting the tenants!\*\*



\*\* watch the movie PUSH if you want to learn more about it!



What can we learn from this?

I have tried to explain why it is becoming so hard to find affordable housing.

When there is **PROFIT** to make...

**It will be made!**



And of course, who will be more affected by this?

Right now, it's the poorer parts of the population. We're talking about many immigrant households, low-income households and young people. But if things don't change - and we know it's hard to change! - more people will be completely excluded from the housing market!



WHY IS THIS  
IMPORTANT  
TO KNOW?!?

Because we need to start talking about housing as a part of people's life, their home, and not just numbers and economic growth.

**WE KNOW IT IS HARD TO CHANGE**

**BUT WE ARE SLOWLY  
REACHING THE POINT OF NO RETURN  
WHEN IT COMES TO HOUSING.**

**SO MAYBE IT'S TIME  
TO START THINKING  
IN A  
DIFFERENT WAY?!?**

Mr. Grander, you are researching about housing inequality. Do you have something you want our readers to know?



Young people or the average person of today would need to know more about what's actually going on with the housing situation. To actually understand this shift in ideas of home and housing has changed, and what this shift that does to society and what that does for us, how it affects people. So I would say that we all need to have a better knowledge about these housing systems in Europe and all over the world actually functions. Who are the stakeholders and what are their interests and why different trajectories take place and so on. An awareness of the financialization and transformation of the housing market is very much important.

The stakeholders who want to make profit, will keep proposing solutions to further privatization, liberalization and reliance on a more free market.

SET THE MARKET FREE!

LET'S INTRODUCE MARKET RENTS!

LET'S MAKE IT EASIER TO GET A MORTGAGE!

But we need to ask those who love freedom at the housing market the serious question:

**FREEDOM FOR WHOM?!?**

Do the 650,000 families waiting for social housing in Italy feel free?

Do all the families in Sweden that were forced to move because of a luxurious renovation feel free?



**WE CAN NO LONGER ACCEPT  
THAT HOUSING IS A SOURCE  
OF PROFIT FOR SOME WHILE  
IT IS BECOMING  
INACCESSIBLE FOR  
OTHERS!**

It is important that people become more aware of how current neoliberal policies are affecting the accessibility of affordable housing.

Because when you know more about a system,  
you will have a better chance to change it.

Now it's your turn:

**GET  
INVOLVED!**

**SPREAD THE  
INFORMATION!**

**DON'T LET THE FREEDOM OF THE  
MARKET COME AT THE COST OF  
FREEDOM OF THE PEOPLE.**

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