

9th March 2021

Dear Sara Arrhenius,
Dear Sophie Tottie,
Dear Lone-Pia Bach,
Dear Björn Larsson,
Dear Oscar Lara,
and other interested agents,

We are writing this letter as we would like to open a conversation with you concerning our position as KKH international students.

We are non-Swedish students of the Decolonizing Architecture Advanced Studies postmaster, a course which is structured as a one-week a month series of classes for the duration of one year. Because of this short-term format we have witnessed the complex process of integrating ourselves in the city housing facilities and more generally, in the school. For us, travelling and not settling in Stockholm, implies a recurring, frustrating accommodation research, especially when trying to avoid the exploitative tourist hospitality market. Indeed, international students are being excluded from the regular Swedish student accommodation because of the very long waiting lists, the shortness of our permanence and the lack of a Swedish residency number.

Since September, we have opened a conversation on this issue among the international students of the programs of Decolonizing Architecture and Collective Practices Research, and with the relative professors, Alessandro Petti, Marie-Louise Richards and Grégory Castéra. In fact, the majority of the student body of these two courses are foreigner participants: 71% of DAAS course this year, 40% of last year's students, 78% for Collective Practice in the current year. According to us, these numbers reveal the great portion of students affected by the highlighted structural problem, regarding which the academy has yet to recognize and process.

In our search for accommodation in the past months, we have attempted to foresee various possibilities, but none has really resolved our concerns so far. In October, this unsolved situation led us to book a shared room at Birka Hostel, as it was the most affordable solution for our short stay. This exposed us to a very dangerous and threatening situation when a man was shot multiple times in our hostel. (Link to article <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/hotfull-knivman-skjuten-av-polis/>)

Considering this extremely shocking experience, combined with our desire to pursue a better solution for the international student body, we decided to contact and inform different representatives of the school through a set of online meetings and email exchanges (Tomas Nilsson, Anneli Hovberger, Gustavo Navarro and Club Mejan).

Further, as the school's vision states, *“the Royal Institute of Art is aiming to open itself more to the world [...] in order to be able to do more and learn together with others”*, we conclude that it must be of primary interest for the academy to host an increasing number of international students. A large international student body offers the benefits of a cultural exchange, a wider critical perspective, a vibrant student-driven academic environment and a renowned reputation of the academy worldwide.

Since we have witnessed several divisive spatial issues within the university spaces that prevent encounters and exchanges between students, we think that an international housing system would provide the social space which currently lacks at the academy. Thus, we believe that the institution will benefit from tackling the housing issues faced by international students, especially if the accommodation will take place on the island of Skeppsholmen.

In the past months, we have received various interesting suggestions along with some practical help, especially from Anneli Hovberger, which is helping us define a short-term vision by arranging an accommodation option with the Af Chapman Hostel, also located in Skeppsholmen. However, we continue to consider extremely important the vision for a concrete housing alternative, to make the international student body a real integrating part of the school community and acknowledge it as an effective body through whom to confront and recalibrate the current fragile social structure of the school.

We strive for the definition of a long-term solution, which meets the student's financial possibilities, but above all, we seek to maintain, extend and nourish the collective social space and time shared at the academy during our seminars, in a safe space. We therefore came to the idea of defining a space for the international student body among the university's facilities. Also, being architects, we propose to compile an inventory of the unused or semi-used spaces among the school facilities on Skeppsholmen, and/or suggest a design for an extension / plug-in space / intervention that could function as temporary accommodation for students.

We hope to begin a fruitful dialogue with you, and we think the Research Week can be a very suitable moment to open it.

The international students:

Steffie De Gaetano, Alice Pontiggia, Silvia Susanna