Inside the Ideal Home:
The Changing Values of Apartment Living
and the Promotion of Consumption in Sweden,
1950–1970

Maria Perers

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Bard Graduate Center
Bard College
Abstract

This dissertation explores the image of the ideal home in Sweden, an idea closely bound to the spatial dynamics of building norms and the outfitting of the domestic household, from the 1950s through the 1960s. By examining official, commercial, and consumer-cooperative ideals of housing and home, I attempt to understand and analyze correlations between various visions of the ideal apartment home and the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts in which they were conceived during the heyday of the Swedish welfare state. This subject has been extensively researched for the first years of the phenomenon, the 1930s and 1940s, but is relatively ignored for the years following World War II, when the new housing policy was formulated and the Record Years began. The study ends in 1970, when the construction of apartments and the standard of living peaked, followed by a focus on building single-family houses and the questioning of building norms. I argue that the values and visions of an ideal home were expressed in the rhetoric and representations of state, consumer-cooperative, and commercial publications. While scholars have studied individual aspects of this context, I maintain that the interrelationship between them produced a widely circulated vision of domesticity between 1950 and 1970. I highlight how commercial actors—primarily Ikea and the interior design magazine Allt i Hemmet (Everything in the Home)—interacted with state institutions in creating and promoting a discourse of the ideal home.
In loving memory of my mother
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Fig. 11.16 Modell 6+2 by Charlotte Rude and Hjördis Olsson-Une. Reproduced from Ikea, Katalog 1970 (Älmhult: Ike, n.d.), 168. Used with the permission of Inter IKEA Systems B.V.


Fig. 11.19 “Furniture or safari?” Reproduced from Lennart Arnstad, “Bästa sättet att använda 6500 kronor,” *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 11 (1969): 66.

Fig. 11.20 The expensive living room—without safari. Reproduced from Lennart Arnstad, “Bästa sättet att använda 6500 kronor,” *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 11 (1969): 68-69.

Fig. 11.21 The cheap living room—with safari. Reproduced from Lennart Arnstad, “Bästa sättet att använda 6500 kronor,” *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 11 (1969): 70-71.


Fig. 12.3 Table and Spika shelves of particleboard. Reproduced from KF Interiör, *Nytt hem 1968-69*, no. 3 (Stockholm: KF Interiör, 1968), 30.

Fig. 12.4 The jacaranda room that won Ikea’s competition for the best living room. Reproduced from Ikea, *Katalog 1967* (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 25. Used with the permission of Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

Fig. 12.5 Living room in pine. Reproduced from Ikea, *Katalog 1967* (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 20. Used with the permission of Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

Fig. 12.6 “There’s room for something more fun here!” Reproduced from Maud Höste, “Här finns plats för något roligare!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 8 (1969): 11.

Fig. 12.7 “A fine little woodworking space in the living room.” Reproduced from Maud Höste, “Här finns plats för något roligare!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 8 (1969): 12-13.


Fig. 12.10 Activity room. Reproduced from Ikea, *Katalog 1970* (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 108. Used with the permission of Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

Fig. 12.12 Carl Malmsten interior. Reproduced from Birgitta Ek, “Svensk tradition hög kvalitet tidlös skönhet,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 7 (1970): 24-25.


Fig. 12.17 Bedroom furniture *Las Vegas* by Gillis Lundgren. Reproduced from Ikea, *Katalog 1968* (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 165. Used with the permission of Inter IKEA Systems B.V.


Fig. 12.19 “Paradis” advertisement. Reproduced from *Allt i hemmet* 14, no. 3 (1969): 17.

Fig. 12.20 Bedroom interior. Reproduced from Ikea, *Katalog 1970* (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 155. Used with the permission of Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

Fig. 12.21 Bedroom interior. Reproduced from Marianne Fredriksson, “Rum för ömhet,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 3 (1970): 24-25.

Fig. 13.1 “The pleasure of dining in the kitchen.” Reproduced from Maud Höste, “Trevligt med matrum i köket,” *Allt i Hemmet* 13, no. 11 (1968): 52-61.

Fig. 13.2 “Domus” advertisement. Reproduced from *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 6 (1970): 8.


Fig. 13.4 Dining areas. Reproduced from Ikea, *Katalog 1968* (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 259. Used with the permission of Inter IKEA Systems B.V.
Fig. 13.5 Dining areas. Reproduced from Maud Höste, “Trevligt med matrum i köket,” *Allt i Hemmet* 13, no. 11 (1968): 54-55.

Fig. 13.6 Camera footage was used to develop a new kitchen standard 1970. Reproduced from *Housing Research and Design in Sweden*, ed. Sven Thiberg (Stockholm: Swedish Council for Building Research, 1990), 173.

Fig. 13.7 “Husqvarna” advertisement. Reproduced from *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 9 (1970): 68-69.

Fig. 13.8 Feature inspired by the Larsson home. Reproduced from Birgitta Ek, “Carl Larsson – ny i dag,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 2 (1970): 14-15.

Preface

“It’s always personal,” my advisor Amy Ogata once said. I had just realized that my interest in rationally planned kitchens and advisory publications for setting up home came from my childhood. While glossy magazines promoted “country-style” kitchens as trendy, I realized that they had never existed in reality. In the Swedish countryside, people wanted to be modern.

My grandmother Walborg and her neighbors started a study circle in 1948 with the goal of planning modern kitchens for themselves. She designed the kitchen of my childhood with features based on the Frankfurt kitchen, creating a workstation that functioned as efficiently as a factory assembly line—all set in the countryside in the rural province of Dalarna.

Scientific management of the home and nonformal, lifelong learning (folkbildning) through study circles and competitions were timely issues. In 1958, my mother Ann-Marie won a national competition, “Machines in the Home,” with her presentation of how a young couple could draft a five-year plan and purchase new appliances—such as a washing machine, refrigerator, and freezer—in the most efficient way. The competition attracted 1,800 participants and her award drew national attention: the Swedish public radio and Dagens Nyheter, the national newspaper, came to interview my mother in her kitchen. (Fig.) In the newspaper photo, my two-year-old sister Karin embraces a shiny stainless-steel Electrolux food processor while my mother stands happily by her streamlined Husqvarna sewing machine.
The Home Research Institute (Hemmens forskningsinstitut) is one of the actors of my dissertation, and it was no surprise to find some of their publications among my mother’s belongings. The rationally planned kitchen is still there in my childhood home.

It’s always personal. Therefore, I dedicate my dissertation in loving memory of my mother, who was an inspiring role model for me and many others.
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This dissertation has been part of my life for a long time, and it is with great gratitude I see it come to an end. First and foremost, I wish to thank Amy Ogata for her outstanding advice and support, her generosity with her time, and her constant belief that I could complete this project. For several years, we met every semester in New York for inspiring conversations, often with Pat Kirkham, who served as a second advisor. I am grateful to have had both of them on board. I want to give special thanks to Helena Mattsson, who also served on my committee, for her interest in my project and for asking the right questions. I would like to thank François Louis and Andrew Morrall of the Bard Graduate Center for arranging PhD forums and following up on the process, and my friends from the BGC for support and fun: Donna Bilak, Caroline Hannah, Sarah Lichtman, Scott Perkins, Katy Reed, Amy Snyder, and Cathy Youngman.

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For the privilege of studying for two years in New York and for years of researching and writing in Sweden, my sincerest gratitude goes out to the Bard Graduate Center and the following Swedish foundations: Åke Wiberg, Estrid Ericson, Helge Ax:son Johnson, Gerda Boëthius, Kjell and Märta Beijer, Birgit and Gad Rausing, Peter and Birgitta Celsing, Stockholms Byggnadsförening’s foundation for the Olle Engkvist award, and the Friends of the Nationalmuseum.

I have the privilege of having a husband who showed not only unfailing encouragement, but also a genuine interest in the period and topic of my project. I wish to convey my heartfelt gratitude to Björn Häger for bearing with me on this long project, for bringing structure to my thinking as well as my daily writing routine, for love and support.
Introduction

From the early 1930s to the 1960s, Sweden’s housing standards rose from among the lowest in Europe to some of the highest in the world.¹ By 1970, Sweden led in new residential construction in proportion to population.² Just as housing increased so did public and private interest in rethinking the domestic interior. Government-backed loans for construction also extended to funds for buying furniture for the new dwellings. A set of emerging standards, magazines, consumer guides and retailers all contributed to a Swedish project of making a home. An important intermediary between state policy and the general public, Allt i Hemmet (Everything in the Home) was by far the dominant interior design magazine of the three titles in print. Ikea, today the world’s largest furniture retailer, grew in interaction with state agencies promoting the “good dwelling” with well-planned kitchens and apartments. In homogenous postwar Sweden of fewer than eight million people, more than half of the population voted for the Social Democrats in 1968.³ Such a monoculture afforded the state, commercial, and consumer-cooperative actors unique opportunities to construct shifting notions of the ideal home between 1950 and 1970.

³ The two times that the Social Democrats received more than half of the votes for parliament were in 1968 with 50.1 percent and in 1940 with 53.8 percent. Swedish television started in 1956 and a second public service channel came in 1969.
This dissertation explores the image of the ideal home in Sweden, an idea closely bound to the spatial dynamics of building norms and the outfitting of the domestic household, from the 1950s through the 1960s. By examining official, commercial, and consumer-cooperative ideals of housing and home, I attempt to understand and analyze correlations between various visions of the ideal apartment home and the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts in which they were conceived during the heyday of the Swedish welfare state. This subject has been extensively researched for the first years of the phenomenon, the 1930s and 1940s, but is relatively ignored for the years following World War II, when the new housing policy was formulated and the Record Years began. The study ends in 1970, when the construction of apartments and the standard of living peaked, followed by a focus on building single-family houses and the questioning of building norms. The material record is vast, therefore, I have focused on how apartment living was represented in the kitchen, living room, and bedroom, as well as the objects within them. The following themes have structured my analysis: personalization and standardization; modern or traditional designs; gendered rooms; children’s spaces; leisure or entertainment spaces; formal and informal spaces; planning; national and international trends; and competition in the furniture market. In parsing these, I argue that the values and visions of an ideal home were expressed in the rhetoric and representations of state, consumer-cooperative, and commercial publications. While scholars have studied individual aspects of this context, I maintain that the interrelationship between them produced a widely circulated vision of domesticity between 1950 and 1970.
From Record Years to Deregulation

The giant leap in housing standards from the early 1930s to the 1960s was due to the unique housing policy Sweden had adopted following World War II.4 While the rest of Europe recovered from the war, neutral Sweden experienced rapid economic growth. The notion of the “good dwelling” formed the basis of a welfare society called the People’s Home (folkhemmet) that did not differentiate between rich and poor, but included all citizens.5 In this way, rather than providing social or project housing for the poor—a solution that became prominent in several European countries and in the United States—successive Swedish Social Democratic governments from 1932 to 1976 sought to create apartments for all.

Providing favorable loans, the state set up building standards that builders had to meet in order to guarantee quality both for the inhabitants and for the state as a lender. Few “ordinary” housing types have been as thoughtfully researched, measured, and standardized as those in Sweden to ensure the “good dwelling” had sufficient space for people, furniture, storage and sunlight. Published as God bostad (Good Dwelling), these norms applied to the entire dwelling, from standardized kitchen cabinets and sink height

4 Dan Hallemar and Daniel Movilla Vega, “Chronology,” in 99 Years of the Housing Question in Sweden, ed. Daniel Movilla Vega (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2017 in collaboration with ArkDes), 69, 82. The unique features of the Swedish housing policy of the 1940s included its inclusive rather than selective policy, municipal control of public housing companies, strong links between public and private apartments for rent, and rents negotiated in collective processes between tenant associations and property owners. In 1968, this “utility value system” replaced the 1942 Rental Regulation Act, including rent control. A fifth aspect of the unique Swedish model was its extensive cooperative sector, with housing owned and managed by cooperative housing associations.

to the floor plan, ensuring that there was room for seating in front of the television in the living room, furniture in the bedroom, and a dining table that could seat eight people.

The vision and research of organizations and state institutions also included consumer guidance on how to set up a home. All were features popularized and disseminated by the most influential interior design magazine of the era, *Allt i Hemmet*; Ikea, the mail-order company that would become a global furniture retailer; and the Cooperative Union and Wholesale Society (Kooperativa förbundet, the Co-op), a leading force in the development of the Swedish welfare state and a competitor of Ikea. Close links between the workers’ and consumer-cooperative movements made the Co-op particularly strong in Social Democratic Sweden, with more than a million members by the early 1950s.

The standard of living based on purchasing power peaked, placing Sweden number four in the world in the early 1970s. Indeed, the purchasing power of Swedish consumers doubled from 1950 to 1975. This period, *rekordåren*—the Record Years, that is, the postwar period until the 1973 oil crisis—saw rapid and sustained economic growth that enabled Sweden to fulfill the welfare reforms and finally solve its long-standing housing shortage. At the same time, the tax ratio increased. Masses of people moved

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6. After the United States, Switzerland, and Luxembourg. GDP per capita (PPP) compares the gross domestic product on a purchasing power parity basis divided by population and is used to measure standard of living. The list comprises the OECD countries. Sweden was number four in 1970-1972, 1974-1975, then dropped to number 13 in 1994 during the financial crisis, and was number 11 in 2017. Fredrik Carlgren, “Sverige i välståndsligan,” accessed as published May 7, 2018, last modified December 12, 2019, https://www.ekonomifakta.se/fakta/ekonomi/tillvaxt/sverige-i-valstandssliger/. Näringlivets Ekonomifakta is part of Svenskt Näringsliv, The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, using official Swedish and international statistics, including Angus Maddison's for the OECD.


from the countryside to the cities as the earlier agrarian society transformed into an industrialized one. The steel and forest industries benefitted from an expanded export economy, and workers were in such high demand that factories recruited laborers from Italy, Finland, and Yugoslavia. The prosperous welfare state, however, had one big problem: a lack of decent housing, now exacerbated by the coming of age of the baby boomers, an unusually large generation of young people about to set up home.\(^9\)

In 1965, parliament decided to build one million dwellings across Sweden in ten years—the so-called Million Program, one of the largest building projects in Europe.\(^10\) To achieve this without overheating the economy or taking labor force from other sectors, it was necessary to rationalize the building industry.\(^11\) Following postwar housing policy, these dwellings were intended for the general public, regardless of income. The high standard set by the Million Program made the apartments attractive for the middle class, although state subsidies and housing allowances also made it possible for low-income families to live in them. Further supporting accessibility, rent control had been in place since 1942. All political parties agreed that it was the responsibility of the state to solve

\(^9\) Kristian Berg, “Det stora bostadsbyggandet: Bakgrund och förutsättningar,” in *Rekordåren - en epok i svenskt bostadsbyggande*, ed. Thomas Hall (Karlskrona: Boverket, 1999), 24-25. In 1960, almost half of the population, regardless of the size of the family, lived in one-bedroom apartments, usually without modern conveniences. The apartment standard had risen since the 1940s and 1950s, but still in 1960, 40 percent had no bathroom, 30 percent had no toilet in the dwelling, more than 25 percent lacked central heating and the same number lacked electric or gas stove, while 40 percent had no refrigerator. Almost all apartments, however, were connected to the water and sewage system by 1960. Nylander, *Svensk bostad 1850-2000*, 149.


the housing problem. In the 1970s, recession and the oil crisis forced a premature end to the Million Program in response to a drop in demand because fewer young people and immigrants were seeking homes. By 1973, there were 20,000 empty apartments in Sweden. And since two-earner families became common as more women worked, more people could afford to buy a house around 1970.

In the deregulation of the 1990s, the state’s postwar influence on the design and construction of housing thoroughly changed. The Conservative government of 1991–1994 dissolved the Ministry of Housing, abolished the state subsidies, and turned the building norms into mere recommendations, leaving only certain basic requirements for sunlight, hygiene, and functionality for people with physical disabilities. This change symbolized a shift from state-supported to market-oriented housing, thereby changing the dwelling from a citizen’s right to a commodity on the market. The recession of the early 1990s further added to record-low construction of around 10,000 apartments per year in the mid-1990s, the lowest since the first decades of the century.

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12 Nylander, Svensk bostad 1850-2000, 191-92. The housing construction diminished from more than 100,000 in 1970 to less than 60,000 in 1979. Ibid., 187, 191.
13 It should be noted that one third of Million Program dwellings were detached houses. Vidén, “Rekordårens bostadsbyggande,” 31. In her dissertation, Annika Almqvist focuses on the dream of owning one’s own home around 1970: “The wave of urban detached housing now also became a Swedish phenomenon and it was accompanied by two migration flows: moving to a house in the country and to a detached house in the suburbs.” Annika Almqvist, Drömmen om det egna huset: Från bostadsförsörjning till livsprojekt, Ph.D. diss. (Uppsala: Sociologiska institutionen Uppsala universitet, 2004), 176.
**Topic and Aims**

This dissertation aims to highlight the role of commercial actors and the consumer-cooperative movement and their relationship with state institutions in creating and promoting a discourse of the ideal home and in encouraging consumption. I demonstrate how *Allt i Hemmet* and the Ikea and Bra bohag catalogs provided advice and bridged the gap between state policy and the general public in disseminating an official ideal. This is in line with design historian Grace Lees-Maffei, who describes advice writers as “the unsung heroes of the attempt to reconcile . . . consumers with modernist designs.”

Acknowledging the role of organizations such as the Co-op in corporatist Sweden, I argue the related importance of commercial actors as intermediaries. Placing Ikea in a context of consumer guidance in the 1950s and 1960s, this study offers a novel approach in explaining the early success of the company. In contrast, the usual explanations are the specific corporate culture developed under the leadership of Ingvar Kamprad, well-developed logistics, flat-packs, and low prices. The various advisory publications promoted a long-standing ideal of “correct” consumption, which was still strong in the first half of the 1960s. Exploring the changing values of apartment living and promotion of consumption, I will further argue that *Allt i Hemmet* was a driving force in shifting the rhetoric and representation of the ideal home in the mid-1960s.

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16 Liberal corporatism is a power structure in which different professional and industrial organizations and interest groups cooperate with the state. Magnusson, “Sweden and the Swedish Model,” 21. See also Bo Rothstein, *Den korporativa staten* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1992).
While historians have described the longing for a rural past in the 1970s, expressed in home furnishings such as pine furniture and printed fabrics with a pattern of little red cottages, I will argue that Allt i Hemmet and Ikea were driving forces in establishing and mediating this ideal in the 1950s and 1960s. This rural ideal sought inspiration partly in the manor house of the eighteenth century. I show how commercial sources stressed an image of the ideal home in the early 1960s, which relied on an elite eighteenth-century material culture. The other key source of inspiration for the rural ideal was the home that the artist couple Karin and Carl Larsson created in the 1890s in the village of Sundborn in the province of Dalarna. Their home is the Swedish equivalent of other well-known nineteenth-century artist homes such as Morris’s Red House in England and van de Velde’s Bloemenwerf in Belgium. Allt i Hemmet reintroduced images of the Larsson dwelling as a model for a personal and flexible home. Design historian Kerstin Wickman describes the magazine as an important arbiter of taste in contrast to that offered by the longstanding voice of Swedish design, the Svenska slöjdföreningen (SSF, the Swedish

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19 While Hedvig Mårdh traces neoclassical revivals from the 1890s to the 1990s, she does not discuss the 1950s and 1960s more than Ikea’s production of a copy of a Haupt dresser and the dining set Desirée, which I will discuss in chapter three and eight and place in a wider context. Hedvig Mårdh, *A Century of Swedish Gustavian Style: Art History, Cultural Heritage and Neoclassical Revivals from the 1890s to the 1990s*, Acta Universitatis Upsalensis Ars Suetica 24, Ph.D. diss. Department of Art History (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2017), 246-47. Anna Womack discusses the 1890-1920 revival of the Gustavian style in furniture making as part of an effort to build national identity. Anna Womack, "Nationellt och smakfullt: omvärderingen av den gustavianska stilen och lanseringen av Georg Haupt som estetiskt ideal - idé och praktik 1890-1920" (master's thesis, Stockholm University, 2012).
Society of Crafts and Design) in the 1960s. While Wickman briefly mentions the interest in the Larsson style of the 1960s, I place the ideal rooted in the artist home in Sundborn in a wider context of urbanization and adaptation.

“Correct” Consumption in the Social Democratic Regime

The literature on consumption is now wide-ranging, but it often overlooks or oversimplifies the Swedish context. Historian Victoria de Grazia’s notion of the “consumption regime,” a phenomenon based in economic, political, and social premises that solves what economic historians traditionally call “the distribution problem” is useful for exploring consumption ideals in the realm of decoration. Explaining how modern systems of distribution, such as mass marketing, supermarkets, and chain retailing, provided consumers with goods from the 1920s onwards, de Grazia describes how an American Fordist mode of consumption took root in Western Europe until the early 1970s. This pattern of distribution and consumption replaced a system dominated by individual bourgeois shopkeepers. Yet the Swedish experience provides an alternate model.

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21 Victoria de Grazia, “Changing Consumption Regimes in Europe, 1930-70: Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution Problem,” in Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the
Mikael Hård, a historian of technology, argues that consumption was tied to new norms and must be placed in a national context. Using Ikea’s standardized measurements of kitchen units as a backdrop, he shows how the “technological standard was the outcome of a compulsory Swedish social democratic ‘consumption regime’ that slowly emerged in the 1930s” establishing itself until the 1970s. In contrast to de Grazia’s Fordist regime, Social Democratic consumption did not embrace a laissez-faire view on economy or involve only individual consumers, Hård explains. Rather, it involved political parties, state institutions, cooperatives, and large private and public companies in the area of housing. My contribution to the notion of the Social Democratic “consumption regime” is to highlight the role of commercial actors—Allt i Hemmet, Ikea, and Bra bohag (Good Home Furnishings)—in the interaction with state institutions and popular movements such as the Co-op.


22 Mikael Hård, “The Good Apartment: The Social (Democratic) Construction of Swedish Homes,” Home Cultures 7, no. 2 (July 2010): 117-19. Hård does not give a chronological overview of how housing standards developed during the postwar period and suggests the trend toward larger apartments as a topic in its own right, to which this dissertation can propose an answer. See also Orsi Husz and Karin Carlsson, “Kökskunskap: Svenska kök mellan social ingenjörskonst och global kommersialism,” in Köket: Rum för drömmar, ideal och vardagsliv under det långa 1900-talet, Nordiska museets handlingar 143, ed. Ulrika Torell, Jenny Lee, and Roger Qvarsell (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2018), 274-99. They also question de Grazia’s argument of the American influence over European mass consumption and explore the interaction between consumer engineering and social engineering and the case of Ikea in the 1970s. They show how Ikea adopted the official norms of kitchen design and marketed them globally as something typically Swedish. Coined during the depression of the 1930s, the term “consumer engineering” entails new ways of making goods desirable to promote consumer spending. A conference in which Husz presented on Ikea and the Consumer Agency concluded that “in addition to producers and consumers, intermediaries such as state agencies and umbrella associations come into the market-making process and have to be incorporated in further research on consumer engineering.” Julian Faust, “Consumer Engineering: Mid-century Mass Consumption between Planning Euphoria and the Limits of Growth, 1930s-1970s” (report from conference at the University of Göttingen, Germany, March 26-28, 2015), accessed March 19, 2020, https://www.ghi-dc.org/events-conferences/event-history/2015/conferences/consumer-engineering-mid-century-mass-consumption-between-planning-euphoria-and-the-limits-of-growth-1930s-1970s.html. The importance of intermediaries resembles the notion of the Social Democratic consumption regime and the topic of this dissertation.
Hård challenges the viewpoint that many Swedish historians have taken on the period of the people’s home since historian Yvonne Hirdman published her book, *Att lägga livet till rätta: studier i svensk folkhemspolitik (How to arrange lives: Studies in the politics of the people’s home)* in 1989.23 If Hirdman’s point was that Swedish welfare politics derived from social engineering and managed the lives of people as a top-down movement, then Hård argues that institutions such as Hemmens Forskningsinstitut (HFI, the Home Research Institute) were mediators rather than the instruments of politics.24 Rather than seeing the housing investigations as “intervention,” Hård evaluates the commission’s aims and sees “information activities concerning the home and the family” without intentionally intervening in people’s lives.25 Hård argues against Hirdman’s view that the researchers were unwilling to change their recommendations according to empirical findings. Taking up one of the examples that Hård uses, this dissertation shows how the National Board of Housing adjusted its recommendations to align with people’s living habits, accepting the use of the living room as a parlor rather than intervening

23 Hård, “The Good Apartment,” 117-33; Yvonne Hirdman, *Att lägga livet till rätta: studier i svensk folkhemspolitik* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 1989). In the 2000s, there was still a tendency to view the people’s home period from the perspective of the individual that had been nurtured in the 1990s. In a largely pejorative manner, this literature describes the collective efforts of Swedish society in the 1930s without taking into consideration the reality of social distress, poor housing conditions, and unemployment at the time. Such perspectives even entered the standard fourteen-volume survey of Swedish art history, *Signum svenska konsthistoria: Konsten 1915-1950*. Jonas Hansson, “Den industriella vårlden,” in *Konsten 1915-1950*, vol. 12 of *Signum svenska konsthistoria* (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 2002), 8-25. In the latest survey of Swedish history, historians still present the work of the HFI ironically. Yvonne Hirdman, Urban Lundberg, and Jenny Björkman, *Sveriges historia 1920-1965* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2012), 580. In the effort to understand the past and present Swedish model, we may adopt a third perspective as an alternative to the normative bias of the critical approach by Hirdman and others and to the reductionism of the traditional approach; this third perspective is called the contextual approach, which has been taken up by historians seeking to avoid value judgements and establish a “neutral” position, rather than taking sides in the debate as to whether the past is good or evil. Urban Lundberg and Mattias Tydén, “In search of the Swedish model: Contested historiography,” in *Swedish Modernism: Architecture, Consumption and the Welfare State*, ed. Helena Mattsson and Sven-Olov Wallenstein (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2010), 36-49.


dogmatically. In contrast to the social engineering approach, I share with researchers such as Hård, Peder Aléx, Maria Göransdotter, and Britta Lövgren the importance of the collaboration between public, private, and cooperative actors to create and promote a discourse regarding the ideal home in Sweden.

Referring to this network of cooperative and popular movements, state subventions and regulations, architectural historian Helena Mattsson argues that the creation of the reasonable consumer was essential for transferring rural Sweden into a modern, industrialized, and globalized world. Indeed, this dissertation demonstrates that the ideal of “correct” or “sound” consumption was still strong in the 1960s. The 1931 modernist manifesto acceptera was a call to accept the new, modern age and a new collectivism, which, rather than a political revolution, promoted a Swedish version of the Keynesian politics of consumption. In 1929, feminist writer Elin Wägner described this

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26 Ibid., 125.
modest revolution as an attempt to erase the class structure: when “the worker’s wife slams her hand on the table and says that she wants two rooms and a kitchen, then there is revolution.” In other words, revolution exists when the workers have the same desires as the middle class.30

Declaring in 1932 that the Social Democrats were based in Liberalism as much as Marxism, Minister of Finance Ernst Wigforss held up the reasonable, educated consumer as replacing the proletariat in the new classless society. Neither an extravagant hedonist nor too thrifty, the active consumer within a democratic capitalist market was the figure that both Wigforss and Keynes envisioned.31 Michel Foucault has argued “that the modern liberal state implies a new rationality whereby the individual acquires more freedom precisely by becoming more disciplined.” Mattsson argues that the reasonable consumer has the freedom to consume and use objects, but at the same time adopts a set of moral values.32 The ideal was to consume reasonably based on needs rather than saving for unreasonable luxury consumption based on desire. She refers to architect Uno Åhrén, who in his article on standardization and personality saw the commodity as a mediator of the new lifestyle in the egalitarian, modern society. The “reasonable consumer” would know the difference between “natural” variations corresponding to individual needs and “senseless,” unsound differences in the design of objects. Åhrén underscored his view with an illustration of “a natural variation of standardized types of glasses,” based on purpose and changing with the times. “A senseless variation” was

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31 Mattsson, “Designing the reasonable consumer,” 79.
32 Ibid., 81.
illustrated by 34 versions of similar, undecorated white coffee cups. Åhrén rejected such “unsound” forms, as they only expressed individuality and thereby separated people from each other. “In this way the unsound commodities that mark social status will be erased and superseded by the art object,” Mattsson explains, “although the commodities would still be differentiated.” Consequently, the reasonable consumer in the new classless society would make rational choices by selecting more ascetic and functional designs based on needs, a “correct” consumption rather than one that was conspicuous and hedonistic based on desires.

Throughout the twentieth century, an ideal of “correct” or rational consumption was upheld in Sweden, apparent in such disparate settings as the Co-op movement, savings banks, home economics classes, social organizations, and institutions. This is the argument of intellectual historian Peder Aléx, on which this dissertation further draws. Aléx sees the discourse of “correct” consumption and thrift as the long-term development of people rooted in poverty and the need to consume resources economically. For Aléx, this apparently “naturally occurring” state of affairs, popular movements in the twentieth century adopted and internalized the discourse. Building on the work of political scientist

34 Ibid.
36 See also Pernilla Jonsson and Leif Runefelt, ”Konsumtion: identitet, makt och livets nödtorft,” in Sverige – en social och ekonomisk historia, ed. Susanna Hedenborg and Mats Morell (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006), 333-38 The authors trace the long history of regulating consumption in Sweden to the days of Gustav Vasa in the sixteenth century, followed by legislation from the seventeenth century onward to the ideal of rational consumption and thrift encouraged by the cooperative and savings banks movements of the early twentieth century.
John W. Kingdon, Aléx sees these actors as “policy entrepreneurs” who study an issue for a long time before it enters the discourse of the larger public. Following this phase, the discourse, once grounded in popular movements, is incorporated, strengthened, and disseminated by state institutions. By naturalizing popular will for the state, Aléx does not adhere to the concept of social engineering.37

The notion of “correct” consumption was a longstanding ideal in Sweden. Design historian Maria Göransdotter has researched the visions of the ideal home in the 1930s and 1940s, and educational efforts, such as courses and exhibitions, in which taste became an indicator of social awareness. By the late 1950s, the practice of reforming the home through such visual and pedagogical activities had found its way into state policy alongside the educational system in home economics.38 Göransdotter and others claim that taste-making efforts disappeared with the arrival of consumer guidance in the 1950s. I show that consumer guidance was neither neutral, nor unrelated to these earlier forms of promotion.39 Normative, moralizing undertones of what was understood as right and wrong were still present in literature and policy of the 1960s meant to guide reasonable consumers in their choice of home furnishings. Nevertheless, a cultural shift was coming. Economic historian Orsi Husz suggests that the late 1960s marked a break with the

37 Aléx, Konsumera rätt, 7-8, 189-91.
traditional poles of “correct,” that is, rational, and irrational consumption. It was not the rational saver who stood against the mass-consuming waster: both figures were equally materialistic. Instead, the new consumer culture of the postwar era entailed a politically aware citizen driven by ideals and unselfish motives.\(^\text{40}\) I will argue that Allt i Hemmet was a driving force in shifting consumption ideals regarding home furnishings in Sweden.

**Literature and Method**

While architectural historians have studied Swedish housing and the Social Democratic efforts to build a people’s home in the 1930s through the 1950s, the 1960s have received less attention.\(^\text{41}\) The available research focuses on the social issues of Million Program neighborhoods as well as the buildings erected and their methods of construction.\(^\text{42}\) There is no scholarly study of the changing concepts of the Swedish “ideal


\(^{42}\) Kristian Berg, “Miljonprogrammet som forskningsfält,” in Rekordåren - en epok i svenskt bostadsbyggande, ed. Thomas Hall (Karlskrona: Boverket, 1999), 11-23; Sonja Vidén, “Rekordårens...
home” in the 1950s and 1960s. The material culture of home furnishings, including marketing, promotion, and consumption, are generally neglected in the existing literature about Swedish housing and domestic culture since the 1950s, with the exception of the writings by Wickman. Having contributed to key surveys in Swedish and English, she places home furnishings in a wider social and political context than more traditional Swedish surveys of furniture and other decorative arts and design.

Wickman not only discusses individual designers and types of furniture but how the home, not least the living room, the production, and the entire retail system change with new channels such as the producer collaboration Bra bohag and the increasing competition between Ikea and the Co-op at the time of the Million Program. While she has surveyed Swedish furniture of the 1960s, I deepen and develop the knowledge of changing home furnishing ideals in the 1950s and 1960s.

This dissertation contributes to the story of everyday interiors, a category little explored in Scandinavian design history, according to Kjetil Fallan. Scholars have placed little emphasis on popular imagery and the ways that the 1960s in particular marked a break from the consumption values of earlier decades. For example, Cilla Robach focuses on discussions among critics and experts writing in Form, the journal of


the SSF, a publication that reached a narrower and more elite readership. This study provides an alternative design history that focuses on popular evocations of designed interiors.\(^{46}\) In this way, it meets the call by the authors of *Scandinavian Design: Alternative Histories* in arguing for an interdisciplinary, in-depth approach that explores how design is mediated through communication channels such as commercial magazines and catalogs rather than design journals and milestone exhibitions.\(^{47}\) I explore the role of magazines, catalogs, and advice literature as mediators between state institutions, producers, and consumers in promoting consumption practices and ideas on the ideal home. For Grace Lees-Maffei mediation is a third stream, along with production and consumption, in design history research: “The mediation focus enables recognition of the fact that design is much more than the object; it is a complex web of surrounding practices and discourses.”\(^{48}\)

By studying ways that the ideal home was presented and mediated in words and images, I use discourse analysis as a research method. Originating with French philosopher Foucault in the 1970s, discourse analysis has developed to include social theory and psychology.\(^{49}\) I understand discourse as a collective term for how different actors discuss a certain phenomenon, in this case the ideal home, in both written and

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\(^{46}\) Cilla Robach, *Formens frigörelse: Konsthantverk och design under debatt i 1960-talets Sverige*, Ph.D. diss. (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag, 2010), 193-225. Curator Cilla Robach of Nationalmuseum in Stockholm has written the only Swedish dissertation covering decorative arts and design of the 1960s to date. Examining the museum’s collection, she focuses on the liberation of form of unique objects and the related debates.


visual form. I do not use discourse in the meaning of a specific ideological perspective through which to analyze the material. Going through a broad range of material, I have searched for keywords, themes, and patterns in order to compare and contrast the findings in broad social, political, economic, and cultural contexts. By analyzing the language in use, I have identified key concepts and turning points in how the different voices of my study discuss the ideal home. By also exploring representations, I have been able to examine interaction between people and furnishings in their spaces as part of a broad definition of discourse including visual language. An advantage of my approach is that all sources, from the official report to the popular magazine, are equally valid, since they all played key roles in forming a conversation about the ideal home in Sweden.\(^50\) Popular magazines have been widely used in design history since the 1980s.\(^51\) I do not examine the lived experience in real apartments, real houses; the representations in this study are staged interiors, that is, versions of ideal homes, visions of domestic life. They are not

\(^{50}\) Mats Börjesson and Eva Palmblad, “Introduktion: ‘Motsatsen till relativism, detta bör vi aldrig glömma, stavas absolutism,’” in Diskursanalys i praktiken, ed. Mats Börjesson and Eva Palmblad (Malmö: Liber, 2007), 16-19.

snapshots of real places.\footnote{Interviews with designers and experts are also beyond the scope of this study.} Indeed, they can be read as designed lifestyles or “imagined interiors,” as Harriet McKay suggests.\footnote{Harriet McKay, “Designing Lifestyles: Retail catalogues,” in \textit{Imagined Interiors: Representing the domestic interior since the Renaissance}, ed. Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant (London: V&A Publications, 2006), 242-43. See also Georgina Downey, ed., \textit{Domestic Interiors: Representing Homes from the Victorians to the Moderns} (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).} They may also be understood in terms of a prescriptive literature that sought to guide the user toward a particular set of values. The magazines, furniture catalogs, and advice literature used in this study all provided ideas for the notion of an ideal home. In addition, \textit{God bostad}, with its measurements and suggestions for using rooms, expressed ideas on the conduct of life in the “good dwelling.” According to Lees-Maffei, domestic advice literature circulates “real ideals.” I agree that: “The normative ideals shared by members of a society prescribe desirable behaviours and consumption practices. Domestic advice literature is, therefore, a richly useful genre of constructed ideals offering insights into the social and material histories of the home.”\footnote{Grace Lees-Maffei, \textit{Design at Home: Domestic Advice Books in Britain and the USA since 1944} (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 2; “Introduction: Studying Advice: Historiography, Methodology, Commentary, Bibliography,” \textit{Journal of Design History} 16, no. 1, Domestic Design Advice (2003): 1-14. For other examples, see Sugg Ryan, \textit{Ideal Homes. 1918-39}; Seductive Discourses: Design Advice for the Home, Special Issue, \textit{Interiors: Design, Architecture, Culture Journal} 5, no. 2 (2014); Kerstin Thörn, \textit{En bostad för hemmet: Idéhistoriska studier i bostadfrågan 1889-1929}, Ph.D. diss., Idéhistoriska skrifter, vol. 20 (Umeå: Umeå Universitet, 1997). In their course, Domestic Interiors ca. 1850-1970, at the BGC Spring 1999, Juliet Kinchin and Paul Stirton emphasized the importance of primary sources such as advice literature and magazines, which has inspired me ever since.}

The notion of the “people's home” was a leitmotif of postwar Swedish housing reform. In addition to the texts, I use the images in the magazines, furniture catalogs, advice literature, and other sources to trace the discourse of the ideal home. To convey their messages of living in the ideal home, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} and the official advisory brochure often staged their interiors through mocked-up homes, sometimes photographed with people in them. In contrast, the furniture catalogs often depicted individual pieces or
a group of furniture placed in a sparsely decorated corner of a suggested room. By the 1960s, the brochures and magazines, as well as furniture catalogs and advertisements, depicted spaces with people and furnishings.

That objects and furniture change human behavior and culture has intrigued historians, sociologists, and other researchers. Scholars such as Norbert Elias and art historian Mimi Hellman have shown how interaction between the refined conduct of a body and fine pieces of furniture or other objects can produce cultural meaning. Following these and other scholars, I use texts and images to explore how furnishings reflect and adjust to changing time and habits. I explore the discourse of the ideal home through an inclusive approach to design as the material culture of everyday life, which Judy Attfield describes as “how people make sense of the world through physical objects.” Analyzing objects as material culture, as Attfield argues, “takes us beyond the point of sale to that part of its history when it has been ‘consumed’ and thus has acquired social or symbolic meanings through contextualization in a home setting.” By examining the texts and images of interiors and furniture, and also the everyday objects found in cupboards and on display in a wide variety of representations, I ask how customs of socializing, gender roles, and raising children change over time.

Reading apartment plans further adds to my discourse analysis. I have been inspired by architects who focus on the inside of the apartments. Lennart Holm, former managing

director of the Swedish National Board of Urban Planning (Statens planverk), and Eva Björklund, former manager at the National Board of Housing, have analyzed apartment plans to trace the development of building norms and changing ideologies in the twentieth century. Holm was one of the most influential architects in Sweden during the postwar period, active in the debate regarding kitchens and living rooms, and he made numerous contributions to Allt i Hemmet. His study showed how space was divided and emphasizes that “the architect and client created a vision of the ‘good life,’ or rather the ‘appropriate life.’” Similarly, Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, former curator of the Nordic Museum, has examined the multiple expressions of homes found in sources such as furniture catalogs and photographs, in contrast to the design icons usually presented in design history surveys.

If God bostad delineated the measurements and functions of the “good dwelling,” then other sources concerned setting up home, furnishing a home, living and entertaining at home. Taken together, there is a doubleness here, to use the term of architectural historian Charles Rice, who views the emergent interior both as a physical, three-dimensional space and as an image, “one that can be imagined and dreamed, and

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59 Holm, “Bostadens form som ideologisk spegel,” 172 and 68. Swedish text: “hur denna fördelning kan förmodas uttrycka arkitektens och hans beställares uppfattning om det ‘goda livet’ eller snarare det ‘lämpliga livet.’”

inhabited as such.” The notion of “home” entails something more than just a dwelling. The term incorporates both the material and structural aspects of housing, but it also encompasses the intangible associations that objects and people perform in domestic space. The idea of home is a kind of space, for, as anthropologist Mary Douglas defines it, “home starts by bringing some space under control.” It does not have to be fixed, however, “but there has to be something regular about the appearance and reappearance of its furnishings. . . . A home is not only a space, it also has some structure in time; and because it is for people who are living in that time and space, it has aesthetic and moral dimensions.” Homes usually have both orientation and boundaries, she continues, which are more or less complex depending “on the ideas that persons are carrying inside their heads about their lives in space and time. For the home is the realization of ideas.” Douglas’s notion of an idea of home begs us to examine the origin of these notions.

Sources and Actors

The larger aim of this dissertation is to highlight the role of commercial actors, in this case *Allt i Hemmet*, Ikea, and Bra bohag, in the Social Democratic “consumption regime,” and their interaction with state institutions and popular movements such as the Co-op. Most of the sources were established in the 1950s: the first Ikea catalog in 1951, the first *God bostad* in 1954, and both *Allt i Hemmet* and Bra bohag in 1956. Bra bohag was the first collaboration of home furnishing producers at a time of increasing consumption, urbanization, and industrialized production. The Co-op had already started producing furniture in the 1920s. In addition to furniture catalogs, the Co-op and Bra bohag also published advisory setting-up-home books. Since *God bostad* and other sources focus on young families living in apartments, including young couples embarking on their first experiences of domesticity, the dissertation follows the same target groups. If the state was the main actor, then these entities were also key commercial and organizational figures.

The State

A major actor, the state stands behind several of the institutions and publications. Providing favorable loans for builders, the agency Kungliga Bostadsstyrelsen, the National Board of Housing, published its building standards in *God bostad*. Currently

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known as Boverket, the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building, and Planning, it functions as a central government authority under the Ministry of Finance.

The state provided loans for setting up homes, *bosättningslån*, to encourage young couples to start their own families and elevate the population. The state acted through Riksbanken, the central bank of Sweden, an agency under the Riksdag, the Swedish Parliament. The advisory brochure, *Bosättning (Setting Up Home)* was published by the central bank in collaboration with the state-supported SSF for couples receiving the state setting-up-home loan.\(^\text{64}\)

To raise the consumer’s awareness of quality, the state and various institutions established the trade description commission, Varudeklarationsnämnden (VDN), in 1951. The VDN quality control was an important feature of consumer guidance, as this study will further show. The Consumer Institute is another state authority featured in this study. Created in 1957 as Statens institut för konsumentfrågor (called Konsumentinstitutet), the National Institute for Consumer Information continued the work of the HFI. Its current name is Konsumentverket, the Swedish Consumer Agency.

*The Design Press in Postwar Sweden*

The launch of the interior design magazine *Allt i Hemmet* in 1956 represented a new type of magazine at a time of increasing consumption and a shift from a rural to an urban society. With few competitors from the 1950s to the 1990s, it is the only Swedish interior magazine.

\(^{64}\) I have examined all issues of *God bostad*, 1954, 1960, 1964, and the draft from 1970; all issues of *Allt i Hemmet*, 1956-1970; all Ikea catalogs, 1951-1970; all Bra bohag catalogs, 1956-1970; all Co-op catalogs related to furniture, including their magazine-like catalog *Vårt hem (Our Home)*, 1967-1970; and the setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning*, 1955 and 1965; as well as advisory literature published by the Co-op and Bra bohag in the 1950s and 1960s. Previous issues of *Bosättning* were published in 1944 and 1948.
design magazine that has remained in publication since that period. The initial goal of producing 30,000 copies was quickly reached and circulation increased to 100,000 copies after only a year, and by 1965 an average of 151,000 copies were printed.\(^6^5\) Its main competitor, *Svenska hem*, had a print run of 25,000 in 1956, which dropped to 5,631 by 1966.\(^6^6\) By 1969, *Allt i Hemmet* peaked with a print run of 163,303.\(^6^7\) A new type of monthly magazine in Sweden, *Allt i Hemmet* targeted families with modest incomes, largely young couples setting up home, and included many economical do-it-yourself projects. The ambition of *Allt i Hemmet* was to interest women and men to the same degree.\(^6^8\)

The two earlier interior design magazines, *Svenska hem i ord och bilder* (*Swedish Homes in Words and Images*), begun in 1913, and *Hem i Sverige* (*Home in Sweden*), begun in 1908, both targeted the middle class.\(^6^9\) *Svenska hem i ord och bilder* had a more affluent readership, focusing on gardening and illustrated reports from the homes of the nobility, directors, high military officials, doctors, artists, architects, and others from the elite classes. *Allt i Hemmet* did not have such celebrity home features. Rather, it showed examples of decorating solutions that could benefit any reader. As a sign of the changing

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\(^6^5\) Lena Larsson, *Varje människa är ett skåp* (Höganäs and Stockholm: Bra Böcker and Trevi, 1991), 116; “Tio år,” *Allt i Hemmet* 11, no. 3 (1966): 8. The article states that the average print run per issue was 80,000 in 1956 and 151,000 in the first six months of 1965.


\(^6^7\) Jan Westerlund, Kantar Sifo, e-mail to author, August 5, 2019. The year 1969 marked the peak of the statistics 1958-1970 from Kantar Sifo.

\(^6^8\) In response to a reader wondering why no handicrafts are presented in the magazine. “Brevledes,” *Allt i Hemmet* 1, no. 4 (1956): 73. The five editorial sections included housing and building, interior design, gardening, food preparation and household issues, family and leisure time, and editorial sections such as answering readers’ questions.

\(^6^9\) There was also *Boet: månadsskrift för hemkultur, hantverk och konstindustri*, a monthly magazine that included interiors; it was produced from 1928 to 1938. Lena Larsson and Erik Ullrich edited *Vi bo: tidskrift för god heminredning*, which only printed two issues (1946-47).
times, Svenska hem merged with Hem i Sverige in 1968. Hem i Sverige was the official journal of the National Association Against Emigration (Nationalföreningen mot emigrationen), a group that sought to combat population loss in Sweden. This publication was part of the “own-your-own-home-movement” (egnahemsrörelslen) and focused on freestanding houses, not apartment living.\(^7\) In 1956, it changed its name to Villatidskriften Hem i Sverige (Villa News, Home in Sweden), as emigration was no longer an issue. Christian Björk has analyzed how, even in the 1950s, Hem i Sverige reinforced an upper-middle-class ideal of spatial hierarchy and division between family members as well as private and public spheres in the home.\(^7\)

Allt i Hemmet’s editorial practice differed starkly from its competitors. Allt i Hemmet recruited enterprising reporter Marianne Fredriksson from Göteborgs-Tidningen as deputy editor-in-chief and Lena Larsson, already a key influencer in interior design, as its editor of the interiors section.\(^7\) At the time, Larsson headed the contemporary interior design shop of the department store NK in Stockholm, NK-bo, where her interiors attracted the attention of customers as well as the weekly press. In 1955, her child-oriented interior at H55, an international exhibition on architecture and design held in Helsingborg, made her an important figure in conversations about family life. Educated as a furniture designer, she had been a housing missionary in the 1940s, researching how people lived and teaching courses and writing books on how to set up home. In the 1950s,

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\(^7\) “Nationalföreningen mot emigrationens egnahemsutställning,” in Stockholms Byggnadsingenjörsförenings byggnadsutställning Bygge och Bo i Liljevalchs Konsthall 9 mars – 2 april 1923 (Stockholm: Stockholms Byggnadsingenjörsförening, 1923), 36-37. That nearly one million Swedes had emigrated to the US since 1850 concerned the National Association Against Emigration.


\(^7\) Erik Sidenbladh, “Marianne Fredriksson död,” Svenska dagbladet, February 11, 2007. For future research, the Nordic Museum holds Lena Larsson’s archive; her biography has yet to be written.
she had gained journalistic experience freelancing for the tabloid *Expressen*, where the editor-in-chief gave space for consumer guidance regarding home furnishings at a time of urbanization.73

“The time needs interior design—you know that,” the founder of *Allt i Hemmet* Lukas Bonnier said when he asked Lena Larsson to become the editor for interiors. Larsson recalled how editor-in-chief Thomas Wedel steered the magazine’s vision, countering Executive Director Bonnier when his suggestions for swimming pools and rock gardens seemed too luxurious for the readership. She liked the practical approach of *Allt i Hemmet* and that it targeted “ordinary” young people.74 Starting as deputy editor-in-chief, Marianne Fredriksson had a strong impact on the magazine and was its editor-in-chief from 1962 until 1974. When she died in 2007, she was known as one of the great invigorators of the Swedish press and as an author whose novels were translated into 47 languages.75 With her, “the magazine really found its form,” Lena Larsson claimed, recalling how Fredriksson, with her working-class background from Gothenburg, combined energy with imagination.76

For ten years, *Allt i Hemmet* had only *Hem i Sverige* and *Svenska hem* as competitors, until the similarly do-it-yourself-oriented *Hem och fritid* (*Home and Leisure*...
Time) started in 1966; it was published by ICA-förlaget, a competitor of Åhlén & Åkerlund. While Allt i Hemmet still dominated the field with 57,400 more copies than Hem och fritid in 1966, reaching its peak print run in 1969, the gap between the two competitors diminished to roughly 19,000 by 1970. General popular magazines for women such as Femina and Husmodern also featured furniture and interiors, but their focus was less on the dwelling and more on the homemaker. From 1956 to the 1990s, apart from two years, there were only three interior design magazines in Sweden. This limited selection for a population of up to 8.5 million people made Allt i Hemmet the most important voice in the new conversation about the Swedish home.

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77 Jan Westerlund, Kantar Sifo, e-mail to author, August 5, 2019. The printrun of Hem och fritid was 81,105 in 1966 (57,416 less than Allt i Hemmet’s 138,521) and 130,013 in 1970 (18,909 less than Allt i Hemmet’s 148,922, which the year before had had 163,303).


79 In 1979, the upscale Sköna hem started with a more exclusive, inspirational approach without do-it-yourself projects; it is still being published. Allt i Hemmet and Hem och fritid merged in 1983-1987 into Bo bra, illustrating the low interest in interior design magazines at the time; both were owned by Åhlén & Åkerlund and Ica-förlaget. In 1987, the publishing houses felt a growing interest again and Bonnier, the owner of Åhlén & Åkerlund, bought the magazine and restarted Allt i Hemmet while ICA-förlaget replaced Hem och fritid with Hus & hem, which still exists. A director of Bonnier thought it was a good idea to merge Allt i Hemmet and Sköna hem in 1992, but the cultures of the magazines were so different that they separated after three years. At the same time, Elle Interiör, now Elle Decoration, started in 1992. With this, still in the mid-1990s, there were only three interior design magazines in Sweden. Since then, the number of Swedish interior design magazines has grown, especially since 2000, including newspaper supplements and television shows. Dan Gordan, editor of Sköna hem, conversation with author, November 15, 2007. In February 2020, Gordan noted that more than 20 interior design magazines remain in Sweden, including Allt i Hemmet, while only a few titles have ceased publishing. They have managed to survive the changing
Ikea

Ikea’s first, rather modest, mail-order catalog with furniture appeared in 1951 in 285,000 copies.\textsuperscript{80} By contrast, its 2018 edition comprised 203 million copies printed in 35 languages, which makes the furniture catalog the most widely circulated publication in the world along with the Bible, the Quran and the Harry Potter series.\textsuperscript{81} Ikea’s predecessor to the furniture catalog was a supplement to the farmer’s national weekly paper, directed “To the people of the countryside.” Founder Ingvar Kamprad’s idea was to provide rural populations an opportunity to purchase directly from the factories with no middlemen. The mail-order supplement included a range of goods, from perfume, nylon stockings, and ballpoint pens to gold-plated wall clocks, a mirror set in a Rococo style frame, and an encyclopedia of politics, targeting the many Swedes typically active in political associations.\textsuperscript{82} To maintain the trust of the customers and survive as a media landscape thanks to a reduction in editorial office staff and cheaper production through digital technology, although their circulation numbers and attendant advertising revenues have fallen in recent years. “Unlike the daily papers, going digital has offered no alternative for such magazines. Although some readers prefer a magazine moment on the couch, the majority prefer fiddling with their smartphones or binging on endless television series.” Dan Gordan, e-mail to author, February 24, 2020. Swedish text: “Och för magasinen (till skillnad mot dagspressen) är det digitala livet inget alternativ, har det visat sig. Man vill njutbläddra i sin inredningstidning men tiden för detta i soffhörnet har minskat till förmån för pill på mobilten och evighetslånga tv-serier.”  
\textsuperscript{80} Tony Nilsson, archivist, Inter Ikea Culture Center AB, Älmhult, e-mail to author, August 1, 2019. The advertising agency was Kliché & Reklam in Landskrona, which had previously helped Kamprad with Ikéa-nytt. In 1959, the print run was 400,000.
\textsuperscript{82} Ikea, Ikéa-nytt - nyckeln till goda inköp, fall and winter 1949-50, 1-9. Swedish text: “Till landsbygdens folk”. Two of the nine pages included “good furniture directly from the factory to factory prices,” including simple book shelves, a kitchen table, sofa bed, the objects mentioned above, and a few other items. The nylon stockings were a novelty in the next issue, spring and summer 1950, which had expanded to 16 pages, including the dining set Visthall on the furniture pages, 2, 11. The print run was 285,000 copies in black and white. Ikéa-nytt was published through spring 1952, informing the customers that in the future Ikea would only sell furniture and domestic articles. See also Bertil Torekull, Leading by Design: The Ikea
company, however, Kamprad realized that he needed to open a permanent exhibition where the customers themselves could see and touch the goods. The first exhibition, in Älmhult, opened in 1953. Five years later he opened the first Ikea store, also in Älmhult.  

Ikea’s success depended, in part, on the transformation of Swedish society in the 1960s, at the time of the Million Program. When thousands of people moved from the countryside to the new suburbs of Stockholm, Ikea opened its flagship store there with self-service and flat packages to meet customers’ needs for home furnishings at affordable prices. That the customers picked the goods themselves from storage shelves and brought them to the cashier was at first an emergency solution to the chaos experienced at the opening in 1965.

The literature on Ikea is extensive. Several books on Ikea focus on founder Ingvar Kamprad as well as the designers, the products, and the stores. Scholars have also paid attention to Ikea’s successful use of storytelling and the image of Sweden in its global branding. While this literature is focused on the company, my dissertation will reach in a different direction, situating the catalog in dialogue with state agencies, other actors, and the influential role of the new postwar housing policy in Sweden. Moreover, I will

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Torekull, Leading by Design, 24-25, 240.  
Wickman, “Homes,” 220.  
See for example Torekull, Leading by Design; Elen Lewis, Great Ikea! A Brand for All the People (London: Cyan Communications, 2005); Eva Atle Bjarnestam, Ikeas – design och identitet (Malmö: Bokförlaget Arena, 2009; Staffan Bengtsson, ed., Ikeas på Liljevalchs konsthall, Liljevalchs catalog no. 480 (Stockholm: Liljevalchs konsthall, 2009); Staffan Bengtsson, Ikeas the Book: Formgivare, produkter och annat (Älmhult: Ikea Family and Titel Books AB, 2012); Johan Stenebo, Sanningen om Ikea (Västerås: Ica Bokförlag, 2009); Husz and Carlsson, “Kökskunskap,” 274-99; Hanna Lindberg, Vastakohtien Ikea (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2006). There are also books with an economic perspective.  
show how Ikea’s success was aided by the attention that Allt i Hemmet paid to the company, in addition to the Swedish standard kitchen and state-supported consumer guidance reforms of the 1950s.

Kooperativa Förbundet, the Cooperative Union and Wholesale Society

Competing with Ikea in selling home furnishings and a leading force in the development of the Swedish welfare state, the consumer cooperative movement was already well established, having begun in 1899 under the influence of the movement that had taken hold in England. Fostering rational consumption, the ideal Co-op consumer was a woman who was thrifty and well organized, who chose quality goods at the right price, and who paid cash in the Co-op shop, which gave dividends to its members. The Co-op fought against consumer credit, which the organization saw as irrational, demoralizing, and tempting overconsumption. Consumer guidance was an important aspect of its mission. Starting with groceries and pioneering a self-service store in Sweden, the Co-op developed into a major actor owning stores, factories such as Gustavsberg porcelain factory, laboratories, and its own advertising agency; it also ran an architecture office that designed standardized stores all over Sweden, in addition to housing, workplaces and community centers. With its close connection to the Social Democrats, the Co-op’s Domus department stores had a prominent place at the center of Swedish municipalities run by the party in the optimistic era of the 1960s.


Founded in 1924, the Co-op architecture office also designed affordable, functional furniture. In 1939, a separate furniture department proposed the aim of creating furnishings whose durability, function, and universal form would serve low-income groups. In 1943, the Co-op took over the HSB shop, making it a predecessor of the organization’s furniture store Möbelkonsum and OBS department stores. HSB, the cooperative Tenants’ Savings and Building Society (Hyresgästernas Sparkasse- och Byggnadsförening) had opened its shop in 1927, specializing in affordable furniture for small apartments designed in the organization’s own studio.

By the late 1960s, the Co-op was, like Ikea, a new furniture giant opening specialized stores called Domus Interiör for the burgeoning young generation that was ready to set up home. To lower costs, the Co-op began importing furniture from Eastern Europe, just as Ikea did, and collaborated with Terence Conran and his British Habitat chain on joint purchases to get larger quantities. For the same reasons, they also collaborated with the Co-op in Denmark and Finland. While the Co-op and Ikea had the same share of the furniture market in the late 1960s, it was commercial Ikea that

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92 In the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition, HSB received much publicity for their work. In the early 1930s, storage furniture inspired by Germany was important in the HSB assortment. Eklund-Nyström, “Funktionalism i folkhemmet,” 170.
eventually won the competition with the help of state-funded agencies and the magazine *Allt i Hemmet*.

**Bra bohag**

At a time of increasing consumption, urbanization and industrialized production, furniture factories saw new possibilities in collaborating on marketing and sales. In 1956, the commercial collaboration Bra bohag was the first group of furniture, textile, and lighting producers who joined together for catalogs, campaigns, and exhibitions. By the following year, the catalog had already become more like a magazine or advisory publication, with texts by Lena Larsson and other interior designers; it was widely distributed until 1991. The repackaging of the Bra Bohag catalog was a result of Brita campaign, proving that debranding and the use of a welfare state ideology could be a successful marketing tool. Helena Mattsson, “Designing the ‘Consumer in Infinity’: The Swedish Cooperative Union’s New Consumer Policy, c. 1970,” in *Scandinavian Design: Alternative Histories*, ed. Kjetil Fallan (London and New York: Berg, 2012), 65-82. In addition to a basic women’s wardrobe in 1972 and basic groceries in blue and white packaging in 1979, basic furniture was introduced in 1978, such as a couch, tables, and chairs inspired by traditional stick-back chairs and gate-legged tables. The series was a response to a critique that the Co-op had lost sight of their ideology and the tradition of social furniture programs of the 1940s and 1950s, as large seating groups and shelving systems with cocktail cabinets took over in the stores in the early 1970s. Monica Boman, “Den kluvna marknaden,” in *Svenska möbler 1890-1990*, ed. Monica Boman (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1991), 430-31. After seven decades of success, the Co-op lost market shares in the 1970s, the heyday of materialism, it was Ikea and not the Co-op that furnished the Swedish home. Sara Kristoffersson, “A brand for everyone,” in *Design Culture: Objects and Approaches*, ed. Guy Julier et al. (London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 80-81.

95 Larsson, “Ett dynamiskt årtionde,” 314; Bra bohag, *Bra bohag katalog 1956-1957* (Stockholm: Bra bohag, 1956). The initial members were: AB Karl Andersson & Söner, Huskvarna Siringe; Bergbom & Co. AB, Malmö; Eilas, Linköping; AB Hagafor Stolfabrik, Nässjö; Ljungs Industrier AB, Malmö, including the brands Dux, Duxello, and Studio; Mölnlycke Väfveri AB, Gothenburg; Tabergs Yllefabriks AB, Smålands Taberg; E. Tingströms Möbelfabriks AB, Valdemarsvik; AB Hugo Troeds Industrier, Bjärnum. Soon joined AB Nybrofabriken, Frösike; and AB Svenska Möbelfabrikerna, Bodafors, which since rationalization in 1945 had become the largest furniture factory for domestic use in the Nordic countries, with 345 employees. See also Boman, “Vardagens decennium,” 244. In the late 1960s, Dux began collaborating with Bruno Mathsson, including selling his classic laminated bentwood chairs from the 1940s.

Svenonius-Lang of the advertising agency Antoni & Gehlin AB. As this study will show, she also influenced the renewal of the Ikea catalog of the early 1960s.

In 1962, Bra bohag opened its own permanent exhibition in Malmö, which worried local furniture dealers, since the producers thereby strengthened their direct contact with customers. Six of the member companies left later that year, but five remained. In 1966, they fused into one company, called Bra Bohag AB, with factories in Denmark and Germany, and shops called DUX of Sweden in Paris, Berlin, and some other German cities. In 1967, there were 300 furniture dealers in Sweden selling Bra bohag furniture. There was also a range of more exclusive furniture for export. Executive Director Erik Ljung explained: “In contrast to other countries, Sweden does not really have an upper class and it is to the upper class we can sell our export furniture.”

Indeed, the development of the reasonable, educated consumer in the new classless society was a vision in the “people’s home.”

**Organization**

After a first chapter giving the historic background 1917–1950, the dissertation is divided into three chronological parts. The first covers the 1950s under the heading Research, Rationalization, and Simplification. The first half of the 1960s addresses the theme Rational Consumption and Urbanization, while the second half of the 1960s marks

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97 Wickman, “Byggbart, utbytbart, flyttbart,” 348-49. He was quoted in the branch journal Möbelvälden. Swedish text: “Sverige har till skillnad från andra länder ingen egentlig överklass och det är just till överklassen vi kan sälja våra exportmöbler.” The remaining producers were AB Svenska Möbelfabrikerna i Bodafors, AB Eilas, Ljungs Industrier AB, E. Tingströms Möbelfabriks AB, and AB Hugo Troeds Industrier. Wickman further points out that many furniture producers in the 1960s began specializing in furniture for the expanding public sector of hospitals, schools, community centers, and offices, rather than producing for the domestic market. Ibid., 349.
the turning point, Changing Ideals: Particleboard, Pine, and Package Kitchens. After my conclusion, I provide an epilogue to account for what happened after 1970, with the standards of *God bostad*, the setting-up-home loan, and related advisory publications.98

Chapter One

From Housing Crisis to the People’s Home, 1917–1950

Sweden took significant steps toward modernizing housing from 1932 to 1970. As the National Board of Housing summarized the housing policy of 1946: “The essential thing was that the policy did not allow any dwellings of poor quality.”\(^1\) In this period, the state provided favorable loans and set building standards, nonprofit organizations and associations worked in parallel with government initiatives to promote what became the vision for the modern home in Sweden. Declining birthrate was a problem along with substandard housing, and one of the state’s first steps in solving these problems came in the form of the 1937 loan program for setting up households (bosättningslån), which stimulated and consolidated the movement. At the same time, designers, furnishing manufacturers, and social scientists offered new concepts for improving living conditions at all levels of Swedish society. These groups and individuals took part in the development of a model for dwelling standards that bore fruit following World War II.

This chapter traces the development from the unsanitary conditions of the 1920s to the new housing policy of the 1940s. The chapter will also highlight the pedagogical methods used in home exhibitions and magazines to promote modern living, as they would be further developed by Allt i Hemmet, the Co-op, and other publications and

organizations in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, the chapter will provide the background for the key concepts—such as the state setting-up-home loans and the good dwelling—that served as the foundation of mid-century Swedish housing policy.

The Swedish Housing Crisis of the Early Twentieth Century

The housing problem of the early 1930s originates with industrialization. The rapid change from an agrarian to an industrial economy had drawn thousands of people from the countryside to Stockholm; from 1850 to 1910, the number of industrial workers living in the capital city increased tenfold. The combination of a housing shortage and speculative market rents forced workers into dark, unsanitary tenement buildings where they battled lice, rats, and tuberculosis. In many cases, a large family and boarders would be forced to live together in a one-room apartment and kitchen, sometimes occupying an even smaller space: a living-kitchen. During this period, it was common for buildings with outhouses to stand at the back of nicer apartment buildings, which faced the street; the division of the well-to-do and the destitute within a given city block was apparent to all. By the start of World War I, as housing construction diminished and inflation increased, the housing situation became ever more precarious; the cost of housing construction rose 75 percent from 1913 to 1917. To maintain some production and reduce unemployment, the government intervened in 1917 with a program of loans and subventions to stem the crisis. This program focused on municipal and public housing


corporations and instituted rent control. Inflation remained uncontrollable, however, and Swedish labor and housing markets remained at crisis levels even though Sweden stayed out of the war.  

In the early 1920s, homeless people lived in emergency housing set up in schools and gymnasiums. Acting on the erroneous belief that urbanization had reached its limit, the government ended the 1917 program just six years later, in 1923. More than one third of Stockholm’s population lived in cramped conditions, and more than one fourth of all families took in boarders. Until the 1930s, Stockholm’s housing standards were second only to Helsinki for being the lowest in Europe. In 1933, only 15 percent of houses in Swedish towns and cities had baths or showers; in addition to the housing problem, one fifth of all Swedish industrial workers were unemployed in the same period.

The situation faced by Sweden after World War I set the stage for Swedish housing policy in the 1940s, which was the basis for the program of modernization implemented in the following decades. New ideas for using apartment space meant new ways to promote modern living, ideas that evolved into the advisory literature of the 1950s and 1960s.

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5 Ibid., 46, 51.
6 Sax, Stockholm nittonhundra, 8–9.
8 Rudberg, “Early Functionalism,” 81.
Social Democratic Policies and the People's Home

When the Social Democrats gained power in the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) in 1932, their goal was to solve the problems of unemployment and overcrowded, unsanitary housing. For 44 years, until 1976, they governed Sweden. The home, with its connotations of comfort and cooperation, was adopted as the symbol of the Social Democrats’ utopian vision of a new, egalitarian welfare society called the People’s Home (folkhemmet). In his 1928 “People’s Home speech,” Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson had explained the metaphor: “In a good home, equality, consideration, cooperation, and helpfulness prevail.”

The concept of the people’s home did not originate with the Social Democrats, however. As political scientist Fredrika Lagergren argues, it built on collectivist ideas that were widespread in Swedish political culture at the turn of the century, when these democratic institutions began to take shape. Aiming at national solidarity and caregiving, the people’s home ideology was partly influenced by Ellen Key, whose ideas of “beauty for all” inspired the social visions of the SSF.

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10 Fredrika Lagergren, På andra sidan välfärdsstaten: En studie i politiska idéers betydelse (Stockholm/Stehag: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, 1999), 196. The dissertation discusses the ideological roots of the Swedish welfare state, focusing on the role of Ellen Key, author and reformer, and Rudolf Kjellén, political scientist and conservative parliamentarian.
11 Ibid., 198.
In the 1930s, during the construction of the welfare state, the people’s home ideology came to include unemployment insurance, prenatal care clinics, state employment offices, housing for large families, and a two-week vacation.

Modernist Apartment Buildings

A building boom and new city planning campaigns followed the arrival of the Social Democratic regime. Housing programs were designed to stimulate both population growth and employment, and the boost in production in turn stimulated the economy. The city of Stockholm announced a competition for the best solution in 1932.¹³ Seven years later, the impact of the drive to modernize housing was evident: it was estimated that 25 percent of all apartment buildings in towns and cities in Sweden were less than a decade old, constructed in the vocabulary of international modernism.¹⁴ The development of housing concepts and city planning arose from pan-European design innovations of the previous decade.

These narrow, standardized, modernist apartments had become the model for construction on the outskirts of Stockholm and around the country in the battle against overcrowding and poor housing conditions. In the spirit of the Swiss-French visionary Le Corbusier and others, the modern, hygienic apartment blocks maximized air and sunlight. Though not large, they managed space well, especially for low-income tenants. Such

¹³ Svedberg, “Funktionalismens bostadsprogram,” 60–61. Some contributions were more experimental, such as those of Nils Ahrbom and Helge Zimdal, which related to Mies van der Rohes’ entry at the Weissenhof exhibition 1927. This apartment building featured movable inner walls, a design that did not see large-scale application in Sweden until much later.
¹⁴ *Sweden Speaks*, 55–80.
designs offered new possibilities for planning a small apartment, including how a modern home on this scale should be furnished. The emerging architecture was closely linked to new ideas of furnishing and making use of the home. One influential publication, Bruno Taut’s *Die neue Wohnung*, described approaches to creating low-cost housing.15 This work demonstrated a combination of the rational housekeeping concept put forth by American domestic science expert Christine Frederick’s with avant-garde housing concepts, such as those of Heinrich Tessenow, Gerrit Rietveld, and the Bauhaus’s Haus am Horn model.16 Taut argued that Frederick’s ideas could save space, and thus cost, while preserving convenience within a dwelling. In Taut’s plan, the kitchen could be reduced to a minimal, though well-equipped, household laboratory: a rationally designed cooking space (*kochküche*) instead of a traditional working-class living-kitchen (Ger. *wohnküche*; Swed. *bostadskök*). He removed the unused parlor of traditional homes in favor of a useful living room.

Georg Muche, Adolf Meyer, and Benita Otte had expressed similar ideas in their experimental Haus am Horn house at the Bauhaus exhibition in Weimar in 1923. This prototype for mass-produced housing represented each room with its specific function. In this plan, for example, the kitchen was used only for food preparation, not for sleeping.

In Frankfurt, architects Ernst May and Grete Schütte-Lihotzky developed minimal dwellings, where multiple uses made a studio serve as a two-bedroom apartment. Based on American ideas of rationalization and realized in low-cost German housing projects of

the 1920s, the modernist principles attracted much interest among Swedish architects and reformers.\(^\text{17}\)

Initiated by the SSF, the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition allowed the Swedish general public to experience modernist architecture and design firsthand.\(^\text{18}\) The architects involved sought to share their vision of architecture for the benefit of all, contributing to the solution of the housing problem for low-income groups. Influenced by the Bauhaus, Uno Åhrén, a personal friend of Walter Gropius, played an important role in the exhibition’s model apartments and small houses.\(^\text{19}\) The architectural competition represented a first in Sweden, as it relied on an ambitious investigation of housing and planning issues to better understand the social, technical, and economic aspects of creating affordable housing.\(^\text{20}\)

With the aim of merging the visions of radical architects with those of the new Social Democratic government, increased construction was proposed as a means to solve the housing problem and boost the employment rate. In 1932, Åhrén worked with Gunnar

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\(^\text{19}\) Rudberg, Uno Åhrén, 52, 62–63.

\(^\text{20}\) Ibid., 67.
Myrdal, an influential Social Democrat and economist, on a study of the housing problem for low-income groups in Gothenburg. They sought to influence the political debate by linking housing and social issues and to involve the government in the construction of affordable housing for the public at large. Enthusiastic about the project, Minister of Finance Ernst Wigforss sanctioned the study as an official state investigation. This in turn inspired the Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Gustav Möller, to initiate a comprehensive commission in the following year to study the housing and social situation (Bostadssociala utredningen), which laid the foundation for the Swedish housing policy for decades to come.21

**Home Exhibitions of the 1930s**

As they became part of the Swedish urban landscape, the new apartment buildings raised questions among architects and organizations. How would people learn to maximize their limited living space, to adopt a modern living with a “laboratory kitchen” and living room? Would they give up the idea of having a parlor in a small home? Would they be willing to reject the clumsy furniture suites of revival styles and celebrate mass-produced individual pieces that could be arranged in a flexible manner?

Efforts by architects, designers, and organizations such as the SSF actively sought to promote modern living ideals and corresponding home furnishings, thereby mirroring the

21 Rudberg, Uno Åhrén, 78–81. Although Alva and Gunnar Myrdal were vocal in the debate, the general welfare reforms, such as child allowance, originated with Gustav Möller. See Bo Rothstein, “Svensk välfärdspolitik och det civila samhället,” in Civilt samhälle kontra offentlig sektor, ed. Lars Trägårdh (Stockholm: SNS Förlag, 1995).
social values and reforms of the Social Democratic political vision of an egalitarian welfare society coalesced in a “people’s home.”

In *Kris i befolkningsfrågan*, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal argued that reforms were not enough, that the various institutions and authorities of society “must step in with energetic housing information.” Investigations showed that people lived in slum conditions not because of economic reasons, but due to a lack of awareness of how to make use of their dwellings. A wide range of social and design organizations undertook home exhibitions in the 1930s in order to raise the awareness among the general public of new types of apartment buildings, how to live in them and how they could be furnished. These included the Swedish Homemakers Association (Husmodersförbundet), the HSB, the SSF, and other organizations—as well as museums such as the Röhsska in Gothenburg—with key designers and firms also participating. Often, such exhibitions corresponded to new social reforms, such as Sweden’s first vacation law of 1938.


23 Alva Myrdal and Gunnar Myrdal, *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1934), 236.

24 Ibid., 236.

25 The major home exhibitions were: The Modern Home in Ålsten, Stockholm 1933; Home in the Collective House (*Hem i kollektivhus*), Stockholm 1935; The Modern Summer Home (*Det moderna...*
Among the new visions for modern living in Sweden, the collective house (kollektivhus) was the most utopian—a combination of American family hotels and their array of cleaning, cooking, and shared social spaces with a well-organized daycare center. To ensure that this new type of dwelling would leave enough room for individuality, the SSF arranged the 1935 exhibition Home in the Collective House (Hem i kollektivhus), emphasizing variant apartment arrangements. Instead of giving abstract information on income and the number of people in each imagined household—as had been done in Swedish home exhibitions since 1930—the exhibition’s curator, Gotthard Johansson, asked journalist Gustaf Näsström to make up life stories about imaginary inhabitants of various social classes and professions. Photographs of the inhabitants at

sommarhemmet, Tyresö 1935; Modern Leisure (Fritiden), Ystad 1936; Small Houses (Småstugor), Stockholm 1937; We Live in Ribershus (Vi bo i Ribershus), Malmö 1938; 11 Families Show Their Homes (11 familjer visa sina hem), Stockholm 1939. Using the same method, the Swedish pavilion at the 1939 New York World’s Fair included contemporary interiors: four living rooms for different social groups, including a combined living room/kitchen for a farmworker, and one interior of a “sport cottage” or weekend cottage as an illustration of the new vacation law. See Perers, “G.A. Berg.”

26 Designed and organized by Sven Markelius and Alva Myrdal in 1935, the first collective house in Sweden opened at no. 6 John Ericsson’s street in Stockholm. The 57 apartments, mostly studios or one-bedrooms, had a kitchenette connected to the central kitchen through a dumbwaiter, a restaurant, a daycare center, and laundry and low-cost cleaning service. The tenants were organized as a co-operative building society, and the rents were lower than in other buildings of similar standard and location. Gustaf Näsström, Hem i kollektivhus: Svenska slöjdföreningens utställning (Stockholm: Svenska slöjdföreningen, 1935), 2-3; Gotthard Johansson, “Hem i kollektivhus,” Form 31, no. 5 (1935): 104-26. For a thorough description, see Eva Rudberg, Sven Markelius, arkitekt (Stockholm: Arkitektur Förlag, 1989), 77-83; Claes Caldenby and Åsa Walldén, Kollektivhus: Sovjet och Sverige omkring 1930 (Stockholm: Statens råd för byggnadsforskning, 1979), 176-200, 214-17.

27 Näsström wrote the stories so well that some visitors thought they depicted real people and their personal reasons for furnishing their apartments as they did. Gotthard Johansson, “Bo bättre: 1930-talets hemutställningar,” in Konsthantverk och hemslöjd i Sverige 1930–1940, ed. Åke Huldt (Göteborg: Förlag
the entrance of each of the eight exhibited apartments strengthened the illusion. This gave new life to the exhibition medium and aimed to show that there was room for individuality, even in a collective house. Allt i Hemmet came to frequently use this pedagogical approach of using fabricated stories to promote modern living in issues published in the 1950s and 1960s.

The fictional inhabitants described in the exhibition catalogue reflect the time and social outlook with their involvement in organizations and striving to learn through study circles and higher education. For example, one inhabitant, a well-educated woman (part of a couple seemingly inspired by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal), has kept her maiden name after her civil marriage and works as a research assistant in the National Board of Health and Welfare on a dissertation about the population issue. Another is a young single woman who earns her own living.

One couple and their family reveal a clearly defined perspective on modern life. The husband, a telephone worker, is active in a union, while his wife is a dressmaker; they met in a communist study circle 17 years before. Their promising son, a high school student, has his own room, while the parents sleep in a sofa bed in the living room and the small children attend a daycare center. Touching pedagogically on what is the right

AB Bokförmedlingen, 1941), 59.
28 Johansson, “Bo bättre,” 44, 59. The following descriptions are based on the catalog by Näsström.
choice for their living space, the catalogue explains that they lost their carved dining room suite in a fire five years ago, and have since acquired the view that such suites are “reactionary”; they’ve bought what they really need in several shops, “cheap, radically modern furnishings.”

Furniture suites such as the one rejected by this couple were still available from Ikea into the 1950s and, as we shall see, Allt i Hemmet and other advisory publications continued to argue for individual pieces of inexpensive furniture rather than dining sets and seating groups in the 1960s.

A designer of particular interest for the later development of home-furnishing ideals, while also rooted in the rural past, Carl Malmsten served as a central actor whose work also appeared in Home in the Collective House. For the exhibition, he had furnished the bachelor pad of painter Helge Holmberg. (Fig. 1.1) Holmberg’s apartment stood in contrast to the intellectuals, workers, and self-supporting city girls featured in Näsström’s collective house entries. Although his profession made him loyal to the working class, he had grown up in the countryside and had studied in a folk high school rather than a more elite institution. Holmberg conducted a study circle in sociology, another touchstone of organization-oriented Sweden. Malmsten’s traditional, solid pine furniture fit well with his design sense, and the catalogue for this exhibition underscored “how harmoniously Mr. Holmberg’s traditionalistic coziness fits in such a typically modern dwelling.”

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29 Näsström, *Hem i kollektivhus*; Johansson, “Hem i kollektivhus,” 109. Swedish text: “reaktionär,” “billig men radikalt modern.” The SSF furnished the apartment with furniture, textiles, and electric fittings from G.A. Berg’s, Futurum, Svenskt Tenn, Otto Dahlin, and Andersson och Liberg. The children’s furniture and most of the textiles came from Futurum. From G.A. Berg’s shop, the society had chosen a round Aalto table and the high back armchair no. 401, which Aalto presented at the 1933 Milan Triennial.

Although the program went to great lengths to exhibit domestic arrangements for many types of households, the collective house remained a utopian vision that was not realized to a greater extent.\textsuperscript{31}

**Modern Living in the Popular Press**

In addition to the journals of the SSF and various women’s and political organizations, there were efforts to promote modern living in popular magazines and newspapers long before *Allt i Hemmet*. To emphasize his message of “liberating stylelessness,” designer G.A. Berg illustrated an article in the affluent *Svenska hem i ord och bilder* with contrasting images of interiors.

If a Rococo interior corresponded to the mentality, social habits, and clothing of eighteenth-century people, Berg questioned how such an environment harmonized with present-day people in a similar setting. Referring to the historic styles popular at the time, Berg stated that “innumerable Swedish homes suffer under the tyranny of furniture suites of revival styles” and a quest to impose social status through furniture, while “one walks around like a stranger among the showy decoration and can neither sit comfortably nor have a good time.”\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31} Apart from Markelius’s house on John Ericssongsatan 6, other collective houses of the time included master builder Olle Engkvist’s on Kungslikkan 11 from 1938 for self-supporting women, and the 1939 Professional Women’s Association’s (Yrkeskvinnors Klubb) building designed by architects Albin Stark and Hillevi Svedberg.

The authors of *acceptera* used similar images to show that the current lifestyle did not correspond to historicized environments. In an article in *Svenska hem i ord och bilder*, Berg contrasted an image of a nineteenth-century parlor, lavishly decorated with ornate dark walls and an abundance of knickknacks, to his own whitewalled, spacious living room with the captions: “We no longer feel comfortable in the gloomy environment of our ancestors . . . but wish for space, cleanliness, and color harmony.”

Such comparisons were already familiar from modernist propaganda. Berg and his fellow authors in *acceptera* built on arguments formed at the turn of the century, when one of the early proponents of modernism, Austrian architect Otto Wagner, used the same arguments, as did Taut (in *Die neue Wohnung*, 1924) and Willi Baumeister in his poster for the Werkbund exhibition *Die Wohnung* in Stuttgart 1927; in the latter, a nineteenth-century bourgeois parlor is shown crossed out by a large red X.

In 1928, the final Building and Home exhibition in Stockholm also served as the first Swedish exhibition to propagate modernism through this approach, contrasting an 1880s interior of the kind described (intended as a hair-raising example) to “The Modern Room” with its light walls, simple curtains, and appropriately modern living room furniture. Such comparative taste-making efforts were also used in Swedish home

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36 *Katalog över Bygge och Bos Jubileumsutställning i Liljevalchs Konsthall 30 mars–15 april 1928* (Stockholm: Stockholms Byggnadsgenförening, 1928), 28; Perers, “Building and Home,” 90. In 1933, HSB used the same method in its “propaganda exhibition” *Bostad och färg* (Dwelling and Color) in
decorating manuals of the 1930s. Furthermore, this kind of provocative lesson became a pedagogical model that *Allt i Hemmet* further developed throughout the 1960s.

**The State Setting-up-home Loan**

With the establishment of its “setting-up-home” loan (bosättningslån) in 1937, the government, institutions, associations, and designers consolidated and intensified their efforts to propagate modernist furnishing ideals to broad sections of the population. From this year on, “thrifty and ambitious young people” about to marry benefited from a state program that helped them set up their homes with loans of up to 1,000 Swedish kronor.

Parliament’s decision to create the loan offering was fueled by the findings of the state Population Commission (Befolkningskommissionen), a committee that studied declining birth rates from 1935 to 1938, along with the Myrdals’ influential book *Kris i befolkningsfrågan*. Since Sweden’s declining birthrate was seen as a major problem, the

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38 *Sweden Speaks*, 79. To prove their suitability for the loans, the young couples had to declare their private means, willingness to save (importantly, those deemed “careless” with money were turned down), and their plan for how they were going to use the loan. The expectation was that the loan would be paid back within five years through installments every third month. By December 1938, 7,765 couples had received loans for a total of 5,764,267 kronor. Local representatives of the central bank participated enthusiastically in the scheme, meeting with applicants who were often familiar with the setting-up-home loans. Kaj Anderson, “Sund start för de nya hemmen,” *Form* 35, no. 3 (1939): 47-48.
principal purpose of the loan was to encourage young people to marry early and have children. The idea was not original to Sweden: ten years before, Frederick had suggested that banks provide reasonable loans to young people so that men would not be forced to put off marriage because they could not afford to start a family and set up a home.¹³⁹

Sveriges Riksbank, the Swedish central bank, confirmed that the loan facilitated earlier marriage for many couples, thereby helping to increase the nation’s nativity rate.⁴⁰

Along with encouraging marriages through the setting-up-home loans, the state aimed to “propagate suitability and good taste in home furnishing,” according to a member of the Population Commission, which also emphasized the value of educational programs connected to the loans.⁴¹ Local bank representatives, who met the applicants, agreed: “Although some people understood that home furnishings should be comfortable, cheerful, and pleasant, too many held ideals that went no further than what they had seen in a shop window, with furniture suites intended for people with an obligation to entertain formally and a larger income, which of course revealed a tendency for new tenants to seek a dwelling that appeared to be beyond what their means allowed.”⁴²

Following a 1939 tour of Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö, reporters from the SSF’s journal *Form* came to the same conclusion, finding among young couples a “total

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⁴⁰ Ibid., 48. The average age of applicants was 25 years.
⁴¹ Andrea Andreen quoted in Åke Stavenow, “Statens bosättningslån: En ökad arbets- och kulturuppgift för Svenska Slöjdföreningen,” *Form* 34 (1938): 169–70. Andreen argued for state support of such activities, which would also be suggested in the commission’s final report. Swedish text: “göra propaganda för ändamålsenlighet och god smak i heminredningen.”
lack of imagination in their home furnishing purchases: the tired repetition of superfluous ornamentation and counterfeit style, baroque furniture throughout new homes across the country.”

Form considered the problem from several angles. The setting-up-home loans, they suggested, had not prevented couples from purchasing even more expensive furniture suites by installments, while the question of sleeping comfort was neglected. Some couples bought furniture before they had rented an apartment, realizing only upon delivery that the suite did not fit.

A state investigation of 164 families throughout Sweden confirmed the findings of Form. Young families were spending too much on furniture and not enough on bed linen and household wares. The kitchen was often used for sleeping, and the living room, still merely a continuation of the bourgeois parlor, was hardly used. “The unoccupied parlor is the symbol of social perfection,” said the investigator Ingeborg Wærn Bugge, who saw children suffer from “the unsuitable furnishings and the absurd living habits. For them there is not much room in such a sterile paradise for two that parents create for themselves.”

When Form asked furniture dealers why they were not advising young couples, they defended themselves: “Oh, no, they cannot be advised. They are so sure about what they want. And when they do not know, they have parents who know so much

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43 Anderson, “Sund start,” 52. Form interviewed local representatives of the central bank of Sweden in Malmö and Stockholm, as well as applicant couples, a HSB builder in Gothenburg, and furniture dealers in Malmö. They also visited homes set up through the loans in Malmö. Swedish text: “Fullkomlig brist i kunskap och fantasi vid bohagsköpet. Samma möbleringsschema för alla nya småhem runt landet. Krusidullmöbler och stilförälskningar högt i kurs.”


better and persistently lead them to the darkest, most ill-conceived styles imaginable—above all fake Chippendales, which range between 860 and 2,000 kronor, but also so-called renaissance and baroque styles.”

Notwithstanding the apparent success of the setting-up-home loan and the state and institutional determination to realize the modernist ideal for a functional living room, the results of this situation were far from satisfactory (except, perhaps, for furniture dealers). At this crucial moment, several new initiatives appeared with the purpose of developing affordable furniture in line with the setting-up-home loan; one such initiative was the Co-op. Conceived with various groups in mind—intellectuals, the middle and working class, small farmers and farm workers—the influential journalist Kaj Anderson characterized this kind of furniture as “classless” and marketable within all social groups. These designs clearly share the same vision of modern living as the furniture that would appear later, in the 1950s, in setting-up-home brochures and in Allt i Hemmet.

48 Ibid., 148 and 456.
Taste and the Promotion of Modern Living

In the public debate triggered by the state setting-up-home loans, the word taste and its relation to educated consumers became a recurring theme. The Population Commission and representatives of the central bank hoped to educate and uplift applicants for the state setting-up-home loans. The SSF had called on the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to encourage the same approach.49

As a continuation of the SSF’s propaganda work through home exhibitions, traveling exhibitions, and pattern books with suitable furniture types for small apartments, Director Åke Stavenow, seeing the chance for an even larger outreach campaign in support of the setting-up-home loans, offered to take the lead.50 Along with exhibitions, the official setting-up-home brochure Bosättning, an important source for this study, was a result of these initiatives. The 1939 exhibition Live Better (Bo bättre) in Grängesberg, a mining community located in the province of Dalarna, was a typical example of the collaboration between designers, the SSF, and the many so-called people’s movements of Sweden to promote modern living.51 Following Stavenow’s ideas for involving home craft in the modern dwelling, a loom appeared prominently in the kitchen of one of the four furnished apartments, along with an Aalto armchair in the living room.52

49 A committee that included Sven Markelius, Gunnar Myrdal, Folke Thunborg, Disa Wästberg, and Åke Stavenow had sent an official letter on July 5, 1938, to the minister, in which they called for effective information and advisory activities relating to the state setting-up-home loan. Stavenow, “Statens bosättningslån,” 169.
50 Ibid., 170.
51 Åke Huldt, “Vårt bohag,” Form 25, no. 3 (1939): 76.
52 “Grängesberg,” Form 35, no. 4 (1939): 88–91. Aby Möbler, Svenska Möbelfabrikerna in Bodafors, and the SSF had furnished the one-bedroom apartment intended for a foreman and his wife. G.A. Berg, HSB, and the department store Paul U. Bergströms AB (PUB) in Stockholm were responsible for the other
guidance and the fostering of educated and rational consumers, who could also make things by and for themselves, were also prevailing features in the 1950s and 1960s. Further support for promoting the modern home came from study circles and activities to educate families in home planning and furnishing, initiated by the SSF and involving Brita Åkerman, Lena Larsson, Erik Berglund, and organizations such as the Co-op. Thus, the state setting-up-home loan program stimulated and consolidated a movement of organizations around Sweden devoted to the promotion of the modern home.

The Family that Outgrew its Home

During the 1940s, efforts by the state and domestic organizations were strengthened by Åkerman’s groundbreaking sociological study on housing, Familjen som växte ur sitt hem (The family that outgrew its home). Her team visited and interviewed 214 families of different social groups in Stockholm in 1937 to learn about how they use their apartments. Åkerman’s conclusion was that families lived in crowded spaces, with furnishings that were not appropriate for the inhabitants’ needs.


In the majority of the one-bedroom apartments observed by the investigators, both rooms were used for activities and socializing as well as sleeping; none of the rooms was used solely as a bedroom. The sewing machine and simpler storage furniture (such as dressers) were often kept in the smaller room, along with seats or couches, sometimes a desk, and even a large table in the middle of the room. The larger room—the living room—was usually occupied by a dining table, surrounded by a sideboard, linen cabinet, radio, and other furniture, such as a sofa bed along one wall.\(^5^5\)

In this way, the working-class family followed a middle-class pattern of having a basically unused living room, typically dominated by a large table, and a study for the male head of the household. The large table, sideboard, and linen cabinet were incorporated into furniture suites, often based on historic revival styles. Architects and reformers found that, while popular, these choices impeded daily use of the living room. Åkerman had assumed that the children would get the smaller of the two rooms, but only 14 out of 26 families with one-bedroom apartments used this as the children’s room.\(^5^6\)

Above all, there were hardly any real beds in such arrangements, which explains why the bed became a focal point in the 1950s. Such studies of crowded housing conditions for families further spurred state initiatives for construction in the 1940s.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 24.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 35.
State Efforts and Building Norms before *God bostad*

The ideal home was predicated on the notion of the good dwelling (*god bostad*).

Before the housing board formalized the building norms in the publication *God bostad* in 1954, there were several earlier efforts to realize its premise. In its administration of the 1917–1923 government program for municipal and public good housing, the state realized that the loans in this period required minimum standards for dwelling size and planning. It tasked a committee to develop these standards, which were presented in *Praktiska och hygieniska bostäder* (*Practical and Hygienic Dwellings*) in 1920.  

Wanting to regulate as little as possible, the committee, however, announced that this “Freedom should not be allowed to degenerate into arbitrariness and carelessness in planning, since it is necessary to consider every square meter of space in the small apartment.”

Some of the values of *God bostad*, such as the need to plan with sunlight and furniture in mind, were first established in the 1920 committee findings. To optimize the use of surface area, this publication promoted a change from the large working kitchen and one or two rooms for universal use toward a modernist plan,


59 Ibid, 102. For example, a family apartment should not have all windows facing north, a kitchenette should have a proper window, and a kitchen should have a wall two meters in length so as to fit a kitchen couch, as in a wohnküche (bostadskök).
arranged according to function, with a small kitchen, small bedrooms, and a large living room for everyday use rather than a parlor.\textsuperscript{60}

In the 1930s, housing policy was linked to family politics, and selective state loans and family allowances were established for housing for large families. Consequently, an important part of Swedish housing policy in this decade was the creation of nonprofit municipal public housing companies.\textsuperscript{61} The abrupt end to housing construction during the early war years made poor housing conditions worse. For this reason, in 1941 the state strengthened its support for nonspeculative housing construction by providing loans at low interest to housing companies; these loans were administered by a new authority, the Byggnadslånebyrå (Building Loan Office), renamed the Bostadsstyrelsen (National Board of Housing), including central and county authorities, in 1948.\textsuperscript{62} To prevent speculative increases of rent, rent control was introduced in 1942.\textsuperscript{63} Updated minimum norms were established as a way to guarantee construction quality for inhabitants as well as for the state, in its role as subsidizing investor. Stockholm’s retired city architect, Sigurd Westholm, wrote these rules and the publication became known as “Westholm’s Bible” (\textit{God bostad} was in effect a revised version of the earlier work).\textsuperscript{64} Still in 1942, he

\textsuperscript{60} Nylander, \textit{Svensk bostad 1850–2000}, 85.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 66–67, 70. In 1936, the city of Stockholm and the HSB started AB Familjebostäder, and in 1937 AB Stockholmshem was founded. Ibid. See also Klas Ramberg, \textit{Allmännyttan: Välfärdsbygge 1850–2000} (Stockholm: Byggförlaget, 2000).
\textsuperscript{64} Sigurd Westholm, \textit{Minimifordringar å storleken av bostadslägenheter i hus avsedda att uppföras med stöd av statligt tertiärlån} (Stockholm: Statens byggnadslånebyrå, 1942). He was also on the 1920 committee.
pointed out that the concept of a living room for everyday use was not widely accepted, and hoped to change the habit of using it as a parlor for special occasions.65

The key problem after World War II was a lack of modern apartments in proportion to the growing number of families and households. In 1945, a report from the government commission on housing (Bostadssociala utredningen) suggested that greater state involvement in housing policy was needed in order to overcome the shortcomings of market-driven housing construction in the previous decades. An official survey gives a snapshot of the housing situation in 1945, describing the layout and contents of all apartments in Sweden:

- Four or more rooms: 15 percent
- Studios or live-in kitchens: 38 percent
- Toilet: 36 percent
- Bathtub or shower: 21 percent
- Electric or gas stove: 33 percent
- Refrigerator: 11 percent

These statistics motivated postwar Swedish housing policy, through the Million Program of 1965–1975, to include both new construction and slum clearance: “The essential thing was that the policy did not allow any dwellings of poor quality,” the

65 Holm, “Välfårdens lägenheter,” 104–05. Westholm emphasized in the introduction that the measurements were minimum and not normal measurements, and that the norms should not lock up the plans, rather “prevent technically unsuitable plans.” The publication includes minimum measurements of rooms for 15 different types of apartments in buildings that are 9–10 meters wide and comments. Ibid., 104. Swedish text: “de äro avsedda förhindra en tekniskt olämplig lägrenhetsutformning.”
National Board of Housing concluded.\textsuperscript{66} The 1946 housing policy established the normal rent for a new one-bedroom apartment for a family as 20 percent of an average industrial worker’s salary. This new policy allowed for a maximum of two people per room in a dwelling (except for the kitchen), thus avoiding a situation of overcrowding. The kitchen was not considered a sleeping room, and consequently, a studio or live-in kitchen was not suitable for a family.\textsuperscript{67} Furthermore, the new housing policy ended special housing for large families, which thereby ended a version of social housing begun in 1935.\textsuperscript{68} In this way, the 1946 housing policy exemplified the Swedish model of a general welfare state, which includes all citizens and makes no difference between rich and poor.\textsuperscript{69} To allow families to afford sufficient space and standard of housing, however, the state provided housing allowances, to which not only large families but all low-income families could apply. Senior citizens were also eligible for a housing allowance. Furthermore, the new housing policy made the state loans for the production of housing by municipal, cooperative, and private companies even more accessible.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{66} Boverket, \textit{Bostadspolitiken}, 50-53. Swedish text: “Det väsentliga var att politiken inte tillåt några bostäder av låg kvalitet.” The housing policy was formulated in government proposition 1946:279.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{68} Nylander, \textit{Svensk bostad 1850-2000}, 66-67. In 1935, the investigations and arguments in \textit{Kris i befolkningsfrågan} had resulted in state subsidy for the construction of apartment buildings for families with at least three children under 16 years, known as “barnrikehus” or “Myrdalshus.”
\textsuperscript{69} Magnusson, “Sweden and the Swedish Model,” 22. For example, when the child allowance was first introduced in 1937 it depended on the income of the parents, which in 1948 was changed to be a general allowance for all children.
\textsuperscript{70} Holm, “Välfärdens lägenheter,” 105-06.
Examining and advising the growing housing construction, the National Board of Housing developed the building norms of “Westholm’s Bible” in its work to approve applications for state loans. In addition to providing favorable loans, the state set up building standards that builders had to meet in order to guarantee the quality of the dwelling, both for the inhabitants and for the state as a lender. Fieldwork conducted by the Home Research Institute (Hemmens forskningsinstitut, HFI) and the building section of the Swedish Institute for Standards (Byggstandardiseringen) went into the crafting of the updated publication called God bostad (Good Dwelling). Published in 1954, God bostad established new building norms for apartment buildings; by extension, these norms could also be applied to single-family houses. The guidelines provided in God bostad highlighted ways to improve housing standards by stipulating five criteria for a “good dwelling.”

The first, to assure sufficient spaciousness, related both to the size and the differentiation of space into rooms. The daily function of the dwelling was to accommodate “family togetherness and meals, work and play,” and sleeping places at night. God bostad included a minimum number of square meters, roughly the same as

71 Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1954), 2-3. The Swedish Institute for Standards, SIS, was founded in 1922 as Svenska Industriens Standardiseringskommission by Sveriges industriförbund (Sweden’s Association of Industry, founded in 1910, and since 2001 included in the organization Svenskt näringsliv, Swedish Enterprise) and Kungl. Ingenjörsvetenskapsakademien (Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, founded in 1919). Byggstandardiseringen was established in 1942 and the HFI in 1944.
Westholm's, and a maximum for different types of apartments, so as to plan with caution.\footnote{While the housing board stated that the minimum size was merely “theoretical and hardly desirable,” the maximum size was a “warning signal” to rethink the plan if exceeded and rather add another room. Although the housing board understood that some tenants would prefer a spacious one-bedroom apartment, they stressed that it would be better for a family with an extra room or half a room. A minimum one-bedroom apartment was 50 square meters. While the 1954 God bostad used the young family as the principal target group for dwellings, that wording was removed in the 1960 edition. Ibid., 3, 6. Swedish text: “Minimiytorna är egentligen enbart teoretiska och bör knappast eftersträvas. . . . ett slags varningssignaler.”}

Second, the plan would further ensure use and placement of furniture. Discussing various types of rooms, God bostad included not only number of square meters but also measurements of walls so as to allow variations in placing furniture.\footnote{The 1954 edition of God bostad included various placements in the bedrooms, seating in the kitchen, and examples of bathrooms. Ibid., 8-9, 11-14.} Hygiene and easy maintenance was the third criterion, which addressed the findings of the 1945 survey and required water, sewage, central heating, electricity, kitchen, and sanitary installations. The standard also required storage space, including access to storage in an attic or basement, and garbage chute. Easy maintenance and durability were also criteria for carpentry and flooring.

The fourth criterion required access to various communal facilities, including a laundry room, and proximity to a grocery store. Well-maintained playgrounds and access to daycare centers and preschools might compensate for a lack of apartment space, the publication asserted, while further emphasizing the importance of services and access to transportation, workplaces, and city.
The fifth criterion further underscored the importance of a city plan to create a calm yet stimulating environment for the well-being of the inhabitants. Images of new housing areas around Stockholm, Gothenburg, and other cities were included as visual guidelines. (Fig. 1.2)

This was a watershed for Swedish housing policy became more widely known, and planners throughout Europe took notice: the 1964 edition of *God bostad* was also published in Germany and Switzerland.

The pace of apartment construction increased throughout the country. Based on *God bostad*, the new apartments were larger and followed a higher standard than had been seen before. Refrigerators became common and electric stoves replaced gas and wood stoves. The one-bedroom apartment became the typical family dwelling, in line with the 1946 housing policy. During the 1950s, the construction of new dwellings in Sweden increased from around 40,000 per year to a then record-high 70,000 per year. By 1958, half of new construction was two-bedroom apartments. (Fig. 1.3) In addition to the bathroom, updates to apartments in this period were most obvious in the kitchen, the space that had been the subject of intense research.

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76 Hård, “The Good Apartment,” 120, referring to Society for Residential Housing in Hamburg (Gesellschaft für Wohnungs- und Siedlungswesen e.V. (GEWOS) and the Swiss Central Office for the Rationalization of Construction (Schweizerische Zentralstelle für Baurationalisierung). Hård uses The Good Apartment as translation of *God bostad*.
Part One, The 1950s: Research, Rationalization, and Simplification

Chapter Two

The Swedish Standard Kitchen and the Family Kitchen

The postwar kitchen was designed according to rational principles of production and efficiency. In Sweden, this resulted in the concept of the standard kitchen. After decades of kitchen research, this new type comprised standardized built-in appliances and cupboards on walls and under counters. This was in contrast to kitchens found in many other European countries where each tenant outfitted their own kitchen space and took everything with them when they moved.

In midcentury Sweden, the standard kitchen was central to the improvement of housing standards in the people's home. Small, compact spaces with uniform counter heights, built-in storage, and permanent appliances had once been based on a German type called the Frankfurt kitchen. When this type reentered the German market in 1953, however, it was often called the “Swedish” or “American” kitchen.¹ This chapter describes the evolution of the Swedish standard kitchen and its wide dissemination through God bostad, Allt i Hemmet, and Ikea.

Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachman claim that “the modern kitchen embodies the ideology of the culture to which it belongs.”² I argue that the Swedish case demonstrates that state-based entities were not alone in promoting the standard kitchen; rather, two commercial actors, *Allt i Hemmet* and Ikea, were instrumental in spreading the norms and imagining ways for consumers to arrange their kitchens. This was so effective and far reaching that, in contrast to the passive approach of the National Board of Housing, *Allt i Hemmet* helped create a new vision of an ideal kitchen: a larger family kitchen. Indeed, it took almost a decade until the housing board incorporated this idea in the 1964 edition of *God bostad*.

*Allt i Hemmet* not only promoted and popularized officially funded research and public information, but also used the power of its popular readership to challenge the ideal of the living room as the main room for the family’s daily activities. At the same time, Ikea went hand in hand with the national agencies in promoting the Swedish standard kitchen, with its measurements and rational arrangements. I argue that Ikea successfully rode the wave of the acclaimed Swedish kitchen research and benefited from its reliability.³

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³ There is no other secondary research on this time period, but regarding the 1970s and 80s, historians Orsi Husz and Karin Carlsson show how Ikea mediated the state Consumer Agency's standard kitchen globally. Husz and Carlsson, "Kökskunskap," 275-99. While they state that Ikea started its kitchen production in 1968, my study shows that Ikea started selling the *Pax* kitchen in 1955. Ibid., 283.
The Development of the Modern Kitchen

The inspiration for modern kitchen design is rooted in nearly a century of theory and development. Already in 1869, the American reformer Catharine Beecher had called for an efficient kitchen using the ship’s galley as a model. Another reformer from America, Christine Frederick, published *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home* in 1915. In this work, Frederick sought to rationalize kitchen work using Frederick W. Taylor’s scientific management methods and the modern factory assembly line from Ford as a model to save time, effort, and space. The goal of Frederick’s scientific housekeeping was to manage the home in a cheap and efficient way without the help of domestic servants. The result was an efficient laboratory where work took place in a continuous flow on counter space set at the same level and where working in a particular direction would save unnecessary steps. Stressing that the kitchen was a place for food preparation and not any other activities, Frederick’s ideal kitchen would be smaller in size, further saving on movement within the space. Following these ideas, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky designed in the 1920s the famous Frankfurt kitchen, and many others created increasingly smaller, logically designed spaces for food preparation.

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4 Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller, *The Bathroom, the Kitchen, and the Aesthetics of Waste: A Process of Elimination* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1992), 13. Swedish women were members of the Committee for the Standardization of Building Materials (Kommittén för standardisering av byggnadsmaterial), called the Standardization Committee. Supported by the government, the committee began in 1920 investigating the kitchen’s plan, interior furnishings, and equipment with the aim of standardizing and encouraging practical kitchen solutions. In 1934, the committee published its results on the kitchen in *Kök och ekonomiavdelningen i mindre bostadslägenheter. Förlag till systematik* (The kitchen and the utility areas in smaller apartments: A proposed systematic), including American kitchen studies done by Frederick and Beecher. Rudberg, “Stäng in arkitekten i kokvrån,” 203; Perers, “Building and Home,” 83.

5 See for example Christine Frederick, *The New Housekeeping: Efficiency Studies in Home Management* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1913) and *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home* (Chicago: American school of home economics, 1915); Bullock, “‘First the kitchen,’” 177-92; Lupton and Miller, *The Bathroom, the Kitchen*. 
These developments focused on efficient workflow planning, giving priority to standardized production of cupboards over modern electrical appliances, which were the focal point of the more spacious American kitchen of the postwar period. The appliances available in the production boom of the 1950s and 1960s in U.S. were out of reach for most families in Europe and not applicable to small kitchen spaces. The efficient European kitchen, a model format in Sweden, became the basis for updates in other European countries in the decades following World War II, as well as in Turkey under Kemal Atatürk.6

A Woman’s Place: In the Kitchen?

The Frankfurt kitchen also carried political undertones. In her original designs, Schütte-Lihotzky saw the modern, rational kitchen as a means to liberate women from the

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burden of domestic work, allowing them to undertake paid work outside the home and facilitate their social and political emancipation.\(^7\) In contrast to what one might assume, this was not the ideology that motivated kitchen design development in Sweden, however forward-thinking the ruling Social Democratic party’s goals may have been. In the early 1930s, Social Democrats argued alongside conservatives in the Swedish parliament that the woman’s “natural” place was in the home.\(^8\)

Given that Sweden had the lowest nativity rate in the world in 1934, one argument solved the population crisis by proposing that married women stay home in order to have children. In parallel with this solution, another argument held that women should step aside to let those who needed paid work the most—namely, men—take over jobs in order to solve the labor market crisis.\(^9\) By the end of the 1930s, however, women aligned with the Social Democratic party argued that they should not be dissuaded from choosing an education and professional life. While this was a major change in position from the mainstream view, a professional, public identity was expected to be adopted in addition to women’s domestic responsibility. Their choices were limited, however, as long as there was no developed childcare and it was difficult for women to access the labor market. In the end, parliamentary discussions resulted in a 1939 law forbidding employers to dismiss women when they married.\(^10\)

In postwar political programs, all parties promoted scientific management of domestic work. This was not to encourage women to undertake paid work outside the

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\(^7\) Oldenziel and Zachmann, “Kitchens as Technology,” 20-21.
\(^8\) Lövgren, *Hemarbete som politik*, 55.
home, but rather to raise the status of housework in order to make women stay at home and have children. The interrelation between the politics of population and housing was clear: better dwellings would facilitate domestic work and make homes more comfortable, increasing the attractiveness of staying at home and having children for women. This strategy was supported by the major political parties in parliament as they set forth their postwar programs.11

Consequently, in the 1940s and 1950s, most Swedish women became housewives and did not undertake paid work outside the home when they married. Housing planners counted married women as caretakers of household and children, even when they did have a job outside the home. In view of the work of the HFI and others, architectural historian Eva Rudberg has pointed out that: “The housewife was not in question, she was a reality. What was revolutionary was the fact that her work was taken seriously in research and planning.”12

The Swedish Standard Kitchen

All Swedish women’s organizations united in the efforts to streamline household work in order to make it more professional, both for women staying at home and for women also gainfully employed. The HFI resulted from these efforts, and the scientific and rational approach to kitchen design represented a means to increase the status of

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11 Ibid., 73-77, 89. Lövgren discusses the Social Democrats, the liberals, the conservatives, and the farmer's party in her dissertation. The communist party was small and has a complicated history, including a division in 1929. While the other parties focused on women as wives and mothers, the liberal party was the exception that focused more on women's right to work outside the home and did not include the full-time home maker as an option. Ibid., 76-77.

domestic work. The rational production and flexibility of the Swedish standard kitchen had an impact for decades to come. Through the Million Program of 1965–1975, it was realized in one million households in Sweden. Through Ikea, the standardized measurements of utilitarian kitchen cabinets and countertops have spread throughout the world. Stipulated in 1950 by the Swedish Institute for Standards (SIS) and promoted by the National Board of Housing in the 1954 God bostad, the standard kitchen was a mandatory prerequisite for government loans.

Building on a system of measurements, the purpose of interchangeable, standardized kitchen units was to facilitate kitchen planning with “sufficient workspace, appropriate work positions, adequately spacious and well-disposed storage.” By agreeing to use the

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13 Lövgren, Hemarbete som politik, 89-90. While I focus on the kitchen design and its dissemination, Maria Göransdotter of Umeå Institute of Design has been working on a PhD project in which she traces the roots of Scandinavian user-centered design to the women working at the HFI, developing the standard kitchen, kitchen utensils, and work methods in the 1940s. Defining ergonomic design practices that are still in use today, these women will get their proper place in Swedish design history. Maria Göransdotter and Johan Redström, “Kitchen choreographies: Homes, things and modern movements” (paper presented at the annual conference of the Design History Society, London, September 2016); “Design Methods and Critical Historiography: An Example from Swedish User-Centered Design,” Design Issues 34, no. 2 (2018): 20-30. She defended her dissertation the week after me, Transitional Design Histories, Umeå Institute of Design Research Publications, No. 008, Ph.D. diss. (Umeå: Umeå University, 2020).


15 Ing-Marie Berg, Carin Boalt, and Lennart Holm, Kök: Planering inredning, ed. Bo Gunnar Lindgren (Stockholm: Hemmens forskningsinstitut, 1952), 2, 13; Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1954), 8. The housing board refers to the above mentioned publication Kök: Planering inredning and Kök med standard, kommentarer och anvisningar till Svensk standard för köksinredning, en SIS-publikation no. 60 (Stockholm: Sveriges standardiseringskommission, 1950). For more on the development of the kitchen in Sweden, see for example several articles in Form no. 4-5, 1973. The research by the HFI also formed the basis for the Norwegian standard kitchen, which was developed by architect Steinar Thomassen for the company Moderne Kjøkken and launched in 1950 as MK-kjøkkenet. Even though the state and organizations were engaged in the development of kitchens, it was a private firm that developed the modules for serial production. Kjetil Rolness, Med smak skal hjemmet bygges: Innredning av det moderne Norge (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995), 143. The Norwegian standard kitchen was presented at meetings of women’s organizations, and Rolness describes how women particularly liked details, such as a pullout workboard, which made it possible to sit down and peel potatoes, and a built-in dish rack where the dishes could dry by themselves, also a common feature in Finland. The MK-kitchen was in production until 1964, replaced by the knockdown version Nordia Systemkjøkken, which was launched by the same company in 1957. Ibid., 144.

standard measurements and designs of various modular units, building and cabinet-making companies could streamline production and increase output while cutting costs and delivering their goods to clients more quickly. The standardized kitchen was intended for apartments, villas, and small houses, but could, with additions, be adapted for farm households. Alice Thiberg, an architect who has researched the kitchen for years, explains that “the idea was to increase the flexibility so that one could choose interiors from different producers and know that they would fit together,” along with providing good functionality in terms of well-designed cabinets and sufficient workspace.

The idea of the Swedish standard kitchen was not decreed from above by the state; rather, it was a collective effort by the building industry, architects, women’s organizations, and others in corporatist Sweden. It was the result of more than ten years of research and investigations by the women’s organizations that formed the HFI, the building section of SIS (Byggstandardiseringen), the Swedish Association of Architects (SAR), and the SSF.

The scientific approach in examining all aspects of household work reflected an ambition to make such work visible and equal to typical male occupations. An example found in the HFI’s kitchen publication Kök was the statement that “scrubbing the floor is, for example, as heavy—and demanding—as milling lumber.”

17 Ibid., 13-14.
19 Berg, Boalt, and Holm, Kök: Planering inredning, 13; Lövgren, Hemarbete som politik, 99.
20 Berg, Boalt, and Holm, Kök: Planering inredning, 6-9. Swedish text: “Att skura är t.ex. lika tungt—energikrävande—som att barka timmer, att stå framåtbehjdynamic och diska tar en tredjedel mer energi än att stå
situations emphasized the scientific and ergonomic approach in this key publication on the Swedish standard kitchen. Published by the HFI in 1952, *Kök: planering inredning* (The Kitchen, Its Planning and Interior) formed the basis for *God bostad*.

Using time and motion studies, women dressed in simple white shirtdresses exemplified the rigor of the kitchen research. Two comparative images illustrate a test of the HFI. (Fig. 2.1) In the first, a woman is doing the dishes after a full meal for five people; she is bending over a low sink with piles of pots, pans, and plates covering every surface. In the second, contrasting image, a woman in a white shirtdress is standing tall in front of her shiny stainless steel sink, seemingly able to organize her work in a rational manner and leaving her dishes to dry in a dish rack conveniently hanging on a tiled wall. The caption explains that the second woman’s work was easy and took eight minutes, as the sink allowed for a logical work process and convenient posture along with efficient equipment, while in the first image the work was tiring and took almost twice as much time, 14 minutes. The following spread features illustrations showing the advantages of saved steps thanks to practical interiors and rational arrangements, with the overall aim that household work should be easy, fast, and give the best result possible.\(^{21}\) Without using the word “ergonomics,” the HFI sought to lessen the physical strain of household work.

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\(^{21}\) Such a comparison seems modern for being the 1950s, as in the 1980s there was an important legal case within the European Union on how to measure equal pay for equal work. By comparing the skills and physical strains of a female cook and a male carpenter, it was proven their work was equivalent and therefore the woman should receive as high a salary as the man working at the same shipyard. Maria Perers, “Sverige, EG och jämställdheten” (B-uppsats, paper in political science, Uppsala university, 1989). Another research institute, focusing on testing the quality of produce, was KF:s provkök, the testing kitchen of the Co-op, founded during the rationing time of World War II in 1943. Under the leadership of Anna-Britt Agnsäter, the institution developed an innovative and successful cook book, *Vår kokbok*, first published in 1951 and the 27th and latest in 2017, and introduced American novelties such as the meat thermometer and measuring spoons, which Agnsäter had seen during a study tour in 1949. “KF Provkök,” KF Arkiv och bibliotek, https://www.kf.se/media/pdf/kf-provkok.pdf. The co-op did not produce kitchen interiors but introduced a furniture department in 1937 promoting simple and functional furniture.\(^{21}\) Berg, Boalt, and Holm, *Kök: Planering inredning*, 7-9.
work: “It is important to have correct work positions and movements, correct workspace measurements, correct use of technology.” Having measured the physical strain of various tasks, the HFI knew that doing dishes bending over the sink took a third more energy as it did when standing with a straight back, as illustrated in the comparative images.\textsuperscript{22} The height of the sink was one of many important measurements in the efficiently planned standard kitchen. With the newly researched measurements, women could finally straighten their backs while doing household work.

The most effective way to realize the rationally planned standard kitchen was to make it a building norm of the 1954 \textit{God bostad}. In this way, the housing board both acknowledged the research done by the women of the HFI and by the SIS and made sure it was implemented in new apartments throughout Sweden. By combining standardized units of cabinets and sinks in a rational way, the housing board stipulated “a well-planned kitchen shall give adequate work areas and appropriate work positions as well as sufficient and well-disposed work and storage spaces.”\textsuperscript{23} (Fig. 2.2) A drawing in \textit{God bostad} gives an example of a standard kitchen planned in a continuous flow of 370 cm from left to right with a countertop height of 85 cm: to the left is shown a pantry with ventilation to the outside, then a sink of stainless steel that is durable and easy to clean. Between the sink and the stove, a “workstation” is placed for rinsing and preparation with cabinets above. Underneath the counter are a pullout chopping-board with a stool and built-in drawers. There is also counter space on the other side of the stove, another

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 6-7. Swedish text: “Viktigt är: riktiga arbetsställningar och handgrepp, riktig måttsättning av arbetsplatserna, riktigt utnyttjande av tekniken.”

principle of a well-planned kitchen, according to God bostad.\textsuperscript{24} Opposite the stove—just a step away when turning around so as not to waste time and steps—there is a section with a refrigerator, counter space with pullout pastry board, and a cabinet above.\textsuperscript{25} In the 1950s, the standard kitchen was made to be used by one person at a time, based on the average height of a Swedish woman, 164 cm plus heels. (Fig. 2.3) She embodied the professional homemaker, working as efficiently as she would at the assembly line of a modern factory, which realized what Frederick called “household engineering.”

\textbf{Ikea Promotes the Standard Kitchen}

The furniture company Ikea took an active part in popularizing the newly established norms to a wide audience while at the same time beginning to experiment with “customer participation.” One year after the 1954 God bostad, Ikea launched its standardized kitchen cabinets. The catalog invoked the work of institutions such as the HFI, proclaiming: “The kitchen is the workplace of the homemaker. It is of greatest importance that the interior be as practical and pleasant as possible. Some saved steps

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\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 8. Swedish text: “Särskilt viktigt är: att rensnings- och beredningsplatsen ligger nära vatten och slask; att spisen är placerad nära rensnings- och beredningsplatsen och vatten; att spisen har avställningsyta på båda sidorna; att arbetsytorna placeras på lämpliga höjder inom området 80-90 cm; att bänklädgen är tillräcklig i första hand för rensning, beredning och diskning.”

\textsuperscript{25} The housing board was restrictive in allowing deviation from the norms. God bostad indicated that a reduction of the kitchen standard might only be discussed in studios and one-bedroom apartments if it would be defendable to somewhat limit the kitchen interior in order to cut the rent. It should be noted, however, that the housing board expressed caution in cutting the length of any element or abolishing it completely, stating that one should carefully consider the consequences for the inhabitant. Examples of diminishing the standard for smaller households were details, such as having a stove with three burners instead of four and perhaps skipping the baking area. The aim of God bostad was, indeed, that the kitchen in apartments should follow the Swedish standard for kitchen interiors, stipulated in 1950. Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1954), 8-9.
turn into miles throughout the years." Thus, Ikea had adopted the modernist arguments for the rationally planned, labor-saving kitchen and joined the state efforts to promote it.

Ikea’s Pax series comprised wall-mounted kitchen cabinets, including glass drawers for spices, and a drawer unit for linen and other household items. The following year, in 1956, Ikea included lower cabinets and a tall cupboard for storage, all in the standardized measurements of 60 cm wide and 60 cm deep, which are still considered standard in Sweden. The height was also standard, 85 cm. (Figs. 2.4-5) One unit also has a pullout chopping board, drawers, and pullout pastry board, similar to suggestions found in God bostad. The countertops were made in either solid pine or of laminated pine covered with Perstorp, a Swedish melamine in line with the hygienic and practical requirements of the time. All cabinets in the Pax series had flat, undecorated surfaces, and were thus easy to

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26 Ikéa, *Katalog 1955* (Agunnaryd: Ikea, n.d.), 106. Swedish text: “Köket är husmors arbetsplats. Det är av största vikt att inredningen är så praktisk och trivsam som möjligt. Några sparade steg blir mil mil med årens lopp. Hemmens Forskningsinstitut med flera institutioner har därför ägnat köket, dess inredning och redskap allra största uppmärksamhet . . .” Company archivist Tony Nilsson writes that Ikea at the time did not have its own product development regarding kitchen, rather applying the Pax design in the assortment directly from a producer, as was the case with furniture at the time. Tony Nilsson, archivist, Inter Ikea Culture Center AB, e-mail to author February 13, 2017. The four pages on kitchens also included several models of stick-back chairs, tables, and a couple of so-called kitchen coaches, wooden couches with removable seats that transform into beds. Ikéa, *Katalog 1955*, 106-09.

27 Referring to Els De Vos, Hård points out that the 60x60 (24x24") standard dates back at least to 1930, when the Belgian architect Louis-Herman De Koninck developed the so-called Cubex Kitchen. Hård, “The Good Apartment,” 118, quoting Els De Vos, “The American Kitchen in Belgium: A Story of Countering, Reversing, Selective Appropriation and Sidelining” (paper presented at the conference Appropriating America, Amsterdam, January 15-17, 2009). The lower cabinets were also 40, 50, 80, 90, and 100 cm wide, depending on if it had one or two doors. Ikéa, *Inredningskatalog 1956* (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 116. By this time, Ikea’s main office had moved to Älmhult to a building next to their exhibition hall and the catalog was called *Inredningskatalog* (home furnishing catalog). Ibid., 3. In 1961, it was called catalog again, *Katalog 1961*.

28 Melamine plastic was introduced in Sweden in 1935 and suited household goods better than earlier plastics, as it could handle warm and cold temperatures and was free from odor and taste. In 1945, HFI had tested an earlier version of a Perstorp laminate made of bakelite, but asked for a laminate of light color. Therefore, Perstorp sent an engineer to the US who returned with a licence to produce laminates of light-colored melamine instead of dark bakelite. In 1950, Perstorp introduced their melamine laminate for countertops, walls, and tables and got HFI’s approval. HSB immediately ordered 120,000 square meters for the new hygienic apartments. One of the most popular designs was Sigvard Bernadotte’s Virrvarr from 1960. Thomas Lindblad, *Bruksföremål av plast* (Lund: Signum, 2008), 82-83; texts from the plastic exhibition Plast at the Nordic Museum 2010-11. The Perstorp laminate is so generic to the Swedish
clean. The wall cabinets had sliding doors to maximize space. Room for personalization came through the choice of paint color, as all cabinets were delivered unpainted. This kept costs down, but Ikea described it in an encouraging, do-it-yourself-manner: “You can easily paint them yourself with acrylic paint, which is easy to use and gives excellent results even for the beginner.”

Likewise, the cabinets were delivered “complete with iron brackets so that you easily can put them up yourself.” In Ikea, the state had thus found its greatest promoter of the Swedish standard kitchen.

Allt i Hemmet and the Efficient Kitchen

Like Ikea, Allt i Hemmet became a vocal proponent of the standard kitchen and also popularized the norms of God bostad and the HFI’s findings for efficiency in production and household work. Already in the first issue in 1956, the magazine explained how, by removing a wall, the Rydin family obtained “a large, airy, dream kitchen, where the whole family is comfortable and mother is saved the trouble of walking an extra 45 kilometers back and forth in the kitchen every year.”

(Fig. 2.6) The new kitchen saved personal energy through its design of the workspace and the rational arrangement of cabinets. It encouraged household work that could be done sitting down and featured practical, built-in features housing trays and spaces to dry kitchen towels. All surfaces

language that the Swedish Academy has included the word perstorpsplatta in the principal dictionary of the Swedish language.

29 Ikéa, Katalog 1955, 109. Swedish text: “Målningen klarar Ni också lätt själv med de nu så populära plastfärgerna, som är lätta att använda och ger utmärkt resultat också för nybörjaren.” The same text was used the following years. Proving a beginning do-it-yourself trend, there are numerous advertisements in Allt i Hemmet for paint and how easy it is to paint the kitchen and other rooms as well as furniture with the new modern paints.


were flat and easy to clean, counters were made from Formica, wooden cabinets were treated with plastic covering, and dust-collecting doorframes and details were eliminated, the article about the Rydin family further explains. The vacuum cleaner and other cleaning equipment could now be stored in a dedicated cabinet.

The research and publications of the HFI were reaping results. While *God bostad* focused on building norms for new apartments, *Allt i Hemmet* and its advertisers could also promote the standard kitchen to people living in private houses. Another article in *Allt i Hemmet* shows how much it cost to change an impractical, dirt-collecting kitchen from 1902 to a modern one, with the help of standardized kitchen cabinets.\(^{32}\) In 1956, the manufacturer AB Borohus advertised its ready-made kitchen cabinets as having been designed with “the experience of thousands of housewives and many years of tests at the Home Research Institute” in mind.\(^{33}\) Affirming the links between organizations and national policy, AB Borohus was owned by the co-operative housing association HSB, which had worked for good, functional dwellings at a reasonable cost since 1923.

The research of the HFI influenced the advertisement and encouraged women to “transform an old-fashioned kitchen into a modern, labor-saving one”: “Make an experiment! When you cook next time, do the dishes, bake, or set the table—count how many steps you need in order to pick up all the bowls and utensils! And calculate how much time and energy you can gain for more fun things—just by having everything

\(^{32}\) Marianne Sandqvist, “Vad kostar ett kök?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 1, no. 7 (1956): 12-14, 74.

\(^{33}\) “BORO färdiga kökssnickerier” advertisement, *Allt i Hemmet* 1, no. 1 (1956): 79, *Allt i Hemmet* 2, no. 1 (1957): 38, no. 3 (and other versions later). Swedish text: “Köksinredningarna från BORO är byggda på tusentsals husmädrars erfarenheter och flera års provningar vid Hemmens Forskningsinstitut.” At the time, this was unusual, as it was a full-page ad dealing with the interior of the kitchen and not just utensils such as kitchen fans and stoves. Hultsfreds-Industrierna also advertises modern kitchen cabinets without “dust-collecting” details, for example in no 5 (1956), 5 and 6 (1957) under the heading “önskeköket,” a kitchen to wish for. This indicates that the manufacturers had adopted the measurements and ideas of standardized kitchen units as stipulated in 1950 and disseminated in *God bostad* (1954).
handy and in its right place!" Such advertisements and articles indicate that household engineering was reaching ordinary Swedish homemaker by the 1950s, exhorting them to change their old-fashioned kitchens. The quote affirms the view that it was the woman in the household who was responsible for domestic labor, and that she was expected to be constantly active.

The Swedish standard kitchen was more about efficient production and organization than technical equipment. Commercial efforts such as *Allt i Hemmet* and *Ikea* thus joined the state in promoting the rationally planned and produced Swedish standard kitchen. There was a shared mission to promote modernist principles in the people’s home that extended from the state to manufacturers and producers of household information and the design press.

**The Housing Board’s View on Kitchen Space**

From an official point of view, the homemaker was central to Swedish policy on domestic kitchens. The 1954 *God bostad* described the kitchen as the central space of the family dwelling, where most of the household work and meals take place, and where the homemaker spends a large part of her day with her small children. It is important, *God bostad* states, that the kitchen be spacious and easy to work in, light and sunny with a central location in the dwelling, including a view of the outdoor playground.

Using information from the earlier housing investigation and the HFI, the housing board proclaimed that homemakers with children prefer a kitchen that “is not only a

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functional ‘workshop’ but also reasonably spacious with a cozy character of the room.” If the kitchen is larger, the argument went, the homemaker can look after small children more efficiently, since they can play in the same space. Having listened to the criticism of small laboratory kitchens of the 1930s, the 1954 God bostad imperatively states that “a kitchen shall contain an eating area” generally big enough for the whole family. In God bostad’s sample drawing, there is room for a table and five chairs by the window.\textsuperscript{35} (See fig. 2.2)

The novelty in the 1954 God bostad was that the kitchen was bigger than a laboratory and that the interior consisted of interchangeable standard units. In terms of square meters, however, it was still rather small for a woman with young children expected to spend most of their day in a kitchen cooking, ironing, reading, and playing in 10 square meters.\textsuperscript{36} The authors of God bostad seem to understand that activities that were supposed to take place in the living room were happening in other spaces, such as the kitchen.

Regarding the living room, which the 1954 God bostad describes as the “family’s central gathering place” for “rest and recreation, hobbies and light work, as well as socializing with guests,” the housing board acknowledged that “in reality it is barely used during the day and becomes the parents’ evening room, where the children are not

\textsuperscript{35} Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1954), 7-10. Swedish text: “Ett kök skall inrymma matplats, i regel tillräckligt stor för familjens gemensamma behov. . . . inte bara utgör en funkionsduglig ‘verkstad’ utan även är någorlunda rymligt och har en trivsam rumskaraktär.” In larger apartments, where the main meals take place in another room than the kitchen, the housing board might allow a kitchen smaller than the recommended 10 square meters. Small kitchens are also required to have a window directly facing the outdoors. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} The kitchen table could be used for taking care of laundry, mending clothes and for seasonal projects such as preserving food, according to God bostad. Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1954), 7. In the 1960 edition of God bostad, a sentence was added about the kitchen table also being used for the homemaker to write and do accounts and for the children’s school work. Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1960), 22.
welcome. This means that the functions that the living room is supposed to have will be crammed into other spaces of the dwelling.” The text mentions experimental plans for a smaller “evening room” instead of an ordinary living room and the daily functions moved to a larger kitchen or combined eating dayroom. The housing board, however, was hesitant to rethink social uses of the kitchen and the living room, and waited for investigations and research rather than suggesting new ideas.

Allt i Hemmet Promotes Larger Kitchens

By contrast, Allt i Hemmet took the argument further, and from its start in 1956 advocated large family kitchens, inspired by both traditional country kitchens and the postwar American “family room,” a space devoted to the family’s daily activities and hobbies. It was not just a question of adapting a kitchen table and chairs. Using influential and well-known people, such as the architect expert Lennart Holm and TV host Ria Wägner, along with other articles and a competition, the magazine promoted the benefits of what it called the “family kitchen.” Allt i Hemmet thereby continued to develop an ongoing discussion about kitchens in Sweden that had begun in 1920.

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38 Ibid., 10.
Allt i Hemmet’s summer issues in general focused on life in a summer cottage, in contrast to the urban apartment, and a 1956 article recounts a successful “makeover” of such a cottage with small rooms transformed into a combined kitchen and living room. Reprising an older, rural, model, this combination rejected the modernist ideals of the spatial separation of living and eating, which were argued on the lines of both efficiency and hygiene. By the 1950s, however, there was no longer a need to crusade against “germs,” because contagious diseases such as tuberculosis had been radically reduced through antibiotics. “The large room has ruled for four years: kitchen and living room in one. A habit from the Stone Age has seen its renaissance.”

To promote the large kitchen, the magazine published two articles in 1956 under the heading “The large kitchen is coming back,” both of which evoke the rural roots of the peasant kitchen, and thus pre-industrial society, while drawing inspiration from the American family room. Marianne Fredriksson proclaims that Swedes are tearing down walls to achieve open floor plans and return the kitchen to what it used to be, namely, “the natural gathering place for the whole family.” A similar experience had already been made in neighboring Finland, but Fredriksson does not mention the “rural functionalism” of the large kitchens in standardized houses built in Finland after the war. In 1956, she states:

41 Marianne Fredriksson, “Storköket kommer tillbaka,” Allt i Hemmet 1, no. 9 (1956): 6-7, 66, 74, introduced by “Köket där vi är tillsammans,” ibid, 4-5; Ria Wågner, “Storköket kommer tillbaka II, Får vi sitta i köket?,” Allt i Hemmet 1, no. 10 (1956): 11-13, 73, 78.
42 Saarikangas, “Women Pioneers,” 295-301. Unlike other European countries, the Finnish government promoted small standardized houses in rural areas instead of apartments after the war to accommodate war veterans and more than 400,000 refugees from Karelia. The kitchen recalled rural traditions of a multipurpose room and was large enough to fit a dining table. Other typical features of the houses were the equal size of rooms and the connection between the kitchen and bedroom, rather than the kitchen-family room
The Swede is a kitchen person, stubbornly, unchangeably. Many failed efforts have been made to bring him out of the kitchen. It has not helped to make the kitchen small, the Swede remains sitting, crowding, playing, reading, sewing, ironing, and working with his hobbies there. . . . In the modernist laboratory kitchen, on the other hand, we have not felt at home for years. You either have an overly hygienic and boring space, or you feel at home and are happy.43

In viewing the Swede as a “kitchen person,” Fredriksson did not consider the fact that the use of the kitchen related to class. Traditionally, the middle class and those above had domestic servants and ate in the dining room, making the kitchen the domain of the maids, while farmers had large country kitchens for meals as well as other activities.

In the investigation of 214 families in Stockholm in 1937, Brita Åkerman confirmed that, to eat in a room other than the kitchen was an “upper-class habit” and even the few workers who had a two-bedroom apartment retained the habit of eating in the kitchen. To further emphasize the class perspective, Åkerman noticed that, regardless of whether middle-class households employed maids, they preferred not to eat in the kitchen, even though it meant more work for the wife to bring out everything from the kitchen to the table in the room.44 Fredriksson was right, however, in describing that all kinds of activities took place in the kitchen, something that God bostad had also noticed, where the living room turned into an evening room for the adults.

44 Åkerman, Familjen som växte ur sitt hem, 44. Swedish text: “överklassvana.”
When it came to actual kitchen facilities with counters, sink, and cabinets, *Allt i Hemmet* followed the standards set by the state in *God bostad*: “Our dreams do not even deal with the height of the sink or the relation between the stove and the workspace—for that we rely on good Swedish standard.” For the rest of the kitchen space, the magazine promoted the more traditional position that the kitchen was more than just a space for the preparation and eating of meals. The family kitchen, in this vision, was the site of a contented family life. By taking this stance, the magazine sought to distance itself not from the necessity of national standards, but from the ideal of using the *living room* for most daily activities. The magazine offered a new version of a traditional farm-type kitchen adapted for contemporary living.

At a time when Sweden was turning from a mainly rural to a more urban society, *Allt i Hemmet* looked back with nostalgia at the agrarian roots of the country kitchen and, by implication, a pre-industrial as well as a pre-urban world. In the dream kitchen that Fredriksson evokes, the carpenter’s bench takes pride of place, and there is room for the children and for their toys, as well as for the sewing machine, sewing basket, rocking chair, a round table, and the kitchen couch. In Fredriksson’s own kitchen, her husband brought up the carpenter’s bench from the apartment building’s basement hobby room, which caused her to reflect: “Dad is happy and the children are happy, and I look out over the mess and think about my grandmother’s peasant kitchen, where grandfather carved wooden spoons and grandmother made candles and where the people of the farm gathered around the table for supper. It was exactly like ours, the natural gathering place,

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but the old kitchen was big enough for the task.”

Like most Swedes at the time, Fredriksson had close family roots and experiences of the countryside, at least during summer visits to relatives (it was not until 1950 that more people lived in towns and cities than in the countryside). The large peasant kitchen, with its various activities—not least crafts—was an ideal to which the majority of the population could relate.

Fredriksson’s idea of the Swede as a “kitchen person” has a long tradition. For hundreds of years, the single cottage, *enkelstugan*, was the typical dwelling of one large room, *stuga*, with an open hearth, serving as both kitchen and living room. There was also an entrance hall and a small chamber behind for storage or sleeping. The next step was a double cottage, *parstugan*, which had an equally large room on the other side of the entrance and chamber. This was used for storage; it would only be heated when hosting guests, festivities, or banquets. From this basic plan, it was easy to develop more elaborate dwellings for priests and officers, also often divided into one side for everyday life and the other for festivities. The dwelling was not divided by practical functions. Therefore, the ideal of a large family kitchen with room for all daily activities was deeply rooted in an agrarian vernacular design. The other room’s focus on festivities is an explanation for the hesitant attitude toward the modern living room, as in traditional use it would serve as the parlor.

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46 Ibid. Swedish text: “Pappa trivs och barnen trivs och jag ser ut över röran och tänker på mormors dalsländska bondekök, där morfar täljde träskedar och mormor stöpte ljus och där gården’s folk samlades runt bordet och kvällsmaten. Det var precis som vårt den naturliga samlingsplatsen—men det gamla köket var tillräckligt stort för uppgiften.”

The same warm childhood memories of the peasant kitchen are brought up in the next issue, in which Ria Wägner continues Allt i Hemmet’s promotion of the return of the large kitchen. Wägner, one of the first TV personalities in Sweden, hosted the television show “At Home” from 1956 to 1977.48 With television being a new, influential medium, it was strategic to choose a popular host and a newly popular medium to promote a traditional view. Wägner also argued against the small laboratory kitchen, stating that “much of the feeling of isolation, unhappiness, and neuroses that the housewives in the cities have I think can be blamed on the far-too-small kitchen where she is reduced to spending most of the day.”49 Instead, Wägner promotes the large kitchen, where the guests prefer to gather, and presents a “dreamlike image” she had seen in an American magazine of an American family room adjacent to the kitchen, with enough space for a place to relax. (Fig. 2.7) She describes the image of the family room as “a large kitchen designed in the American way, with a fireplace, a large, durable dropleaf table, couches placed at an angle, an easy chair and large cabinets for toys, and a space, of course, for the television.”50 Indeed, her ideal room is a combination of a kitchen, a room for the whole family, and a television viewing space.51

American magazines rooted the dream firmly in the realms of a robust economy and American notions of “the good life,” based on material prosperity and an abundance of

50 Ibid., 11, 78. Swedish text: “drömlig bild” “Här är ett storkök i amerikansk utformning med öppen spis, tåligt och stort slagbord, vinkelställda dyschor, fåtölj och rejäla skåp för leksakerna och naturligtvis för TV-apparaten.”
51 Ibid., 78.
consumable goods and appliances, as well as evocations of an idyllic past. This point is further illustrated by the article “Can USA kitchens teach us something?” which ran in 1958. The magazine’s editor for the home and household, Birgit Sunesson, answers, “Yes, we have lots to learn! Not in terms of the right height of the sink—there we are sovereign—but in terms of coziness.” The images show modern American kitchens with cabinets in veneered wood, “all desirable technical equipment,” and “a workspace like an easily accessible island on the large floor, something we really should imitate—and yet, this is not a boring kitchen!” Sunesson was tired of the “desperately boring Swedish kitchen,” which is “efficient and labor-saving,” but “the experts seem to have lost the aspect of coziness” that she finds in American kitchens.

Allt i Hemmet's Competition for the Family Kitchen

Combining the coziness of the American family room with the multi-purpose farm kitchen, Allt i Hemmet promoted the family kitchen in a large competition in 1957. In this way, the magazine envisioned a larger kitchen while embracing a longing for a rural past through furniture and crafts. The official setting-up-home brochure Bosättning, the Ikea and Co-op catalogs further supported the traditional concept.

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53 Ibid., 71. Swedish text: “Ett toppmodernt amerikanskt kök med allt vad man kan önska sej av teknisk utrustning—arbetsbänken som en lättåtkomlig ö på den stora golvytan är verkligen något som vi borde kunna ta efter—och ändå är inte detta kök tråkigt!”

54 Ibid., 70. Swedish text: “Detta förtyvivlat tråkiga svenska kök. Förlåt så mycket! Det är effektivt, det är arbetsbesparande . . . tycks experterna ha tappat bort trivselfaktorerna.”
As inspiration before embarking on the competition, Allt i Hemmet introduced the readers to three “ordinary” women's "dream kitchens." In a colorful drawing spreading over two pages, homemaker Viveka Holmquist has planned her ideal family kitchen with room for activities. (Fig. 2.8) She can do the small laundry in the double sink. In the red sofa, “she can relax while the children play or read a story while the potatoes are boiling.” A climbing tree is central in the large room, inspired by Lena Larsson’s “all-room” in the H55 exhibition. For her husband and the boys, Holmquist includes a carpenter’s bench, and for herself a drawing table. The other two women included a workspace with a sewing machine, more typical of the time. As a technological prerequisite for the family kitchen, an advertisement for kitchen fans states, “Your kitchen becomes a family room” if you avoid the odor of cooking.

The competition was open to everyone (except for experts in the field), for people living both in the countryside and in towns. The magazine provided a selection of 58 pieces of furniture, so that readers could collage them on the floor plan and write a description for submission. The actual kitchen section was set out according to the rational Swedish standard kitchen as described in the 1954 God bostad, with standardized, built-in cabinets, sink, refrigerator, and pantry. The novelty was the size, 36 square meters gave other furnishing possibilities than the kitchen of around 10 square meters that God bostad suggested. (Figs. 2.9-10) The competition presented attractive

58 The jury consisted of Lars Ågren, architect, who designed the big kitchen in practice in the experimental house in Järnbrott, Gothenburg, Lena Larsson, editor of interiors AiH, Margit Engnes, food expert AiH, Ria
awards, including a first prize for kitchen renovation for 3,000 kronor, equivalent to up to five months’ salary for a person working in retail trade in 1957. Presented over eight pages, the feature was a serious undertaking for the magazine.

Allt i Hemmet’s competition confirmed the interest in doing practical work in the kitchen and above all to get more space. “We are impressed,” ran the headline when the competition was completed. Larsson shared with readers the jury’s thoughts on the 1,249 contributions. She noted with satisfaction that people had enjoyed the competition and had added to their descriptions “a whole lot of juicy criticism of their own tiny kitchen, and they say good riddance to them!” The criteria used by the jury were:

a) a work area for the homemaker with good connection to an eating place,

b) a leisure area for active business, one or more,

c) an area for rest and pure relaxation, tired feet, story reading or listening, preferably one where you could cuddle up, not just one or two pieces of seating furniture, and

d) a well-thought-out children’s section (if there were children in the family).

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Wägner, journalist, Thomas Wedel and Marianne Fredriksson, editors AiH. “Vinn ett drömkök,” 34-36.  
Socialstyrelsen, Löner 1957 del 1 Industriägde, handelsanställda m.fl, Sveriges officiella statistik Arbetsmarknad samt arbets- och löneförhållanden (Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen, 1959), 21. The average monthly salary for adults working in retail trade was for clerical personnel: men 1,190, women 719, for shop personnel: men 914, women 610 kronor. Statistics for industrial and other workers is more complicated as it is indicated on an hourly basis.

Lena Larsson, “Vi är imponerade,” Allt i Hemmet 2, no. 3 (1957): 36-37.

Ibid., 37. Swedish text: “Och så kryddat beskrivningen med en hel del saftig kritik av det egna pluttköket, som man mest önskar dit pepparn växer.”

Ibid., 37. Swedish text: “a) en arbetsdel för husmor i god kontakt med matplats. b) en fritidsdel för en eller flera aktiva sysslor. c) en del för vila och ren avkoppling, trötta fötter, sagoläsning eller lyssnande. Helst en sådan där man kunde krypa upp, inte bare en eller annan sittmöbel. samt d) en genomtänkt barndel (om barn fanns i familjen).”
The jury was struck by the fact that “so many people actually long for a space for both a loom and a carpenter’s bench and had wished for that for years, as a hobby, as relaxation, to do small repair work, or just for play.” There had also been many good solutions for a place for sewing and mending clothes as well as ironing. Just as Fredriksson’s husband had brought the carpenter’s bench up from the basement, many of the participants in the competition had included it in the family kitchen.

The winner of Allt i Hemmet’s competition was 32-year-old Elsie Jonsson, a homemaker from the south of Sweden, where she lived with her farmer husband. She included all the various functions in a practical and aesthetic manner. (Figs. 2.11-12) Jonsson not only used the suggested pieces of furniture, but also had chosen some of her own. Around the table designed by String Design in the 1950s, a company famous for its shelving system, she sets black Ant chairs by Arne Jacobsen, designed in 1952. A loom is central, placed in the middle of the long wall next to the children’s play corner, while another corner features seating furniture along with a radio. Abstract art on the wall emphasizes the modernity of the space. Perhaps it is there, in the mixture between contemporary Scandinavian design, abstract art, the loom, and the children’s play corner, that the image of the wholesome yet modern Swedish ideal home emerges. In terms of furniture, however, it was another ideal, based in vernacular tradition, that emerged in Allt i Hemmet, Bosättning, and the Ikea and Co-op catalogs. The promotion of crafts, as seen in the loom and children's right to play and space, were key features of the ideal family kitchen.

In American postwar dwellings, kitchen spaces that included an area for play purportedly enhanced family togetherness, a point that served as a prominent theme in the discourse on family housing. As in Allt i Hemmet, family housing was a consistent theme in popular family magazines in the U.S. at the time. As an example of an ideal dwelling for a growing family, a 1949 issue of Parents’ Magazine presented a design by Marvin Fitch with a playroom in an open space between the children’s bedrooms, the kitchen, and the dining area. Allowing small private bedrooms and a larger open play area with supervision from the kitchen became a common feature of suburban postwar houses in America. By incorporating the playroom inside the ideal family kitchen, Allt i Hemmet further stressed the importance of children’s right to play and space in the postwar period. Climbing trees, carpenter’s benches, and other furnishings stimulating creativity in the family kitchen had their roots in peasant society via modernism to the ideal homes of postwar America.

In the people’s home of Sweden, the efforts to promote good, functional furnishings were a joint venture of the national institutions along with organizations and a commercial interior design magazine. Indeed, almost half of the 58 pieces of furniture in Allt i Hemmet’s kitchen competition were found in the 1955 Bosättning, the official setting-up-home brochure. The furniture that Allt i Hemmet proposed was strongly modernist. There were no historic revival styles or complete suites of furniture, and no applied ornamentation appeared on the objects. Many of the 58 pieces were well-known

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64 Amy F. Ogata, Designing the Creative Child: Playthings and Places in Midcentury America (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 73.
65 Ibid., 74-75.
types that could have been part of any home exhibition in the 1930s or early 1940s arranged by the SSF. There were, for example, two versions of Bruno Mathsson’s laminated bentwood chairs with saddle-girth or cushion (1934 and 1941), a safari chair such as included in the Triva-bygg series (1944), a plain stick-back chair such as Carl Malmsten’s Lilla Åland (1942), an adjustable Eames-style work chair, simple tables of various kinds, shelves, and cabinets. Also reminiscent of the 1930s was a wall-hung foldable writing desk and a cubic children’s table and stool. Indeed, the plain, angular surfaces and shapes of the furniture selection is reminiscent of an advertisement for standard furniture adjusted to the setting-up-home loan in 1939.67 (Fig. 2.13)

With their traditional and vernacular roots, the informality of the stick-back chair and the Windsor-type chair with armrests suited both the kitchen and the living room. Through texts and images, the furniture catalogs served as prescriptive advice literature in a way similar to the magazine and setting-up-home brochure. Ikea followed the advice given in Bosättning with its images of such chairs presented as practical and informal chairs for the living room, as well as for the kitchen.68 (Fig. 2.14) The Co-op also presented tables and stick-back chairs without making a difference between kitchen and living room.69

69 Co-op möbler, Mathord och stolar (Stockholm: KF, 1956). The brochure presents a collaboration between the Co-ops in Denmark and Sweden, in which Danish chairs are exchanged by Swedish tables produced in the Co-op’s newly bought factory in Lammhult. Similar to Ikea’s tables with Perstorp covering, the Co-op presented tables with Formica in blue, red, or gray, but without elaborating a selling text, rather giving basic information on quality and utility. “The Danish Chairs” of Windsor type and ordinary stick-
References to the past and notions of coziness were also associated with the rocking chair, which was also featured in the competition as well as the setting-up-home brochure, the Co-op, and Ikea catalogs. In 1957, Ikea promoted a new rocking chair, *Gunga Din*, similarly prompting memories of grandparents: “One sits perfectly in it—do you remember how grandmother always used to fall asleep in her rocking chair? . . . It’s about time the nice old rocking chair came into fashion again.” It was also promoted as an “ultra-modern rocking chair that, in a reverential manner, blends into every environment, bringing coziness and happiness.”71 (Fig. 2.15)

Such evocations of grandmother, coziness, happiness, and the past reflect a longing for a peasant past at a time of urbanization. Indeed, the first issue of *Allt i Hemmet* in 1956 had a rocking chair on the cover. The 1957 Ikea rocking chair was recognizably modern, with sleek straight lines reminiscent of Ilmari Tapiovaara’s slim stick-back chairs *Fanett* for Edsbyn 1955 and Thea Leonard’s *Flamingo* for Nässjö Stolfabrik, also from 1955.72 (Figs. 2.16-17) The *Gunga Din* rocking chair indicates that Ikea executives back were introduced in Co-op’s furniture catalog of 1955, *Möbler 1955* (Stockholm: Konsum-Kooperativa, 1955) in the Royal Library. The 1957 catalog, in the Nordic Museum library, mentions the acquisition of an own furniture factory in Lammhult, *Möbler 1957* (Stockholm: Konsum-Kooperativa, 1957), preface. The co-op setting-up home book *Vårt hem* from 1956, does not speak of the kitchen and living room per se, rather functions of sleeping, eating, storage, etc, and describes on a spread different types of chairs suitable for tables, including work-chair, stick-back and bentwood chairs, including a drawing of Jacobsen’s ant chair of plywood. Kerstin Henrikson, *Vårt hem* (Stockholm: Ehlins folkbildningsförlaget AB, 1956), 36-37. (The book was reprinted in 1958 and 1960)


71 Möbel-Ikéa, *Inredningskatalog 1957*, 26. *Gunga Din* was a play with words, as “gunga” means “to rock” in Swedish and is also the title of an 1890 poem by Rudyard Kipling and a 1939 movie. Swedish text: “Man sitter utmärkt i den—kommer Ni ihåg att mormor alltid brukade somna i sin gungstol— . . . På tiden att den gamla trevliga gungstolen kommit till heders igen. En ultramodern gungstol som på ett pietetsfullt sätt småler in i varje miljö spridande trivsel och glädje.”

72 Dan Gordan, *Svenska stolar och deras formgivare 1899-2001* (Stockholm: Byggförlaget, 2002), 156, 161. The same year, the *Flamingo* chair won an award at H55 and the Nationalmuseum acquired it to its collections. Ibid., 156.
kept a close eye on developments in modern furniture design, even if they promoted them with backward-looking longing.

Similarly redolent of the peasant kitchen was the kitchen couch, which had its revival in Allt i Hemmet’s competition and elsewhere. Inspired by a vernacular wooden pullout bed with a seat that lifts, the kitchen couch had appeared at the 1917 Home Exhibition, where traditional peasant furniture provided an ideal furniture for working-class homes.73 The kitchen couch suited the small dwelling, as it could easily turn into a bed at night.74

The 1954 God bostad stated that a good dwelling should offer enough space so that nobody needs to sleep in the kitchen.75 This ideal was not a reality for everyone, which Ikea and Allt i Hemmet acknowledged.76 In spite of modernist efforts to do away with the couch, the kitchen of the 1954 God bostad had sufficient space for a kitchen couch, which was revived and featured in a modern version in the 1955 Bosättning. (Fig. 2.18) It did not serve as a bed, however, as it was a simple built-in upholstered bench with backrest attached to the wall, making it easy to clean the floor underneath.

73 Johan Knutsson, I ’hemtrefnadens’ tid: Allmoge, nationalromantik och konstnärligt nyskapande i arkitektur, möbler och inredningar 1890-1930 (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2010), 151-57. The style also suited tourist hotels and bourgeois summerhouses.
74 Following the modernist idea of not sleeping in the kitchen, there were no kitchen couches featured in Bosättning in the 1940s or the popular advisory book on home decoration Heminredning in the editions from 1947 and 1955, only kitchen tables and chairs. Lena Larsson and Elias Svedberg, Heminredning (Stockholm: Forum, 1947 and 1955). The completely revised edition of 1965, however, includes the kitchen couch stating that the enlarged standard kitchen has revived the practical and nice wooden couch, 68, 103.
76 From the start in 1951, the Ikea catalog featured kitchen couches intended for sleeping. One of the two kitchen couches in Allt i Hemmet’s competition seems to offer the possibility of sleeping and is similar to Ikea’s kitchen couch Siv, featured in the catalogs of 1954–1955. Ikéa, Katalog (1954), 78, (1955), 108. It was not until 1956 that Ikea launched its first kitchen couch that was simply a couch. Named Cello, it was “a dainty and nice couch for the modern kitchen,” (“En nätt och trevlig soffa för det moderna köket”) clad with imitated leather, standing on four slim legs. But the kitchen couch that allowed for sleeping was demanded by customers, as two out of three kitchen couches in the 1957 catalog could each transform into two beds. Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog 1957, 108.
Traditional Crafts in the Modern Home and the Family Kitchen Competition

To further emphasize the nostalgic image of the rural roots of the country kitchen—with its rocking and stick-back chairs, kitchen couches, and cozy atmosphere—certain traditional crafts were promoted as appropriate for taking place in the modern home. Among the 58 pieces in Allt i Hemmet’s competition for the family kitchen, there were also a loom and a carpenter’s bench, both signifying rural, traditional crafts and the contemporary notion of productive leisure.

In the 1950s, most home textiles such as kitchen towels were still handwoven, especially among women who had grown up in the countryside and had attended schools to learn how to run a farming household.\(^77\) It was not, however, only rural women who were encouraged to weave in the people’s home of Sweden. In fact, the 1955 Bosättning, which targeted young couples all over Sweden, argued for the advantages of making things yourself for the home. In addition to saving money, home crafts were broadly useful skills, and “it also brings a great joy to have made things yourself for the home, as one is extra careful about them and thus becomes more careful about the rest of the inventories of the home.”\(^78\)

There is a moral undertone in this passage reminiscent of the intention of nineteenth-century sloyd (slöjd) education to teach young girls to become good homemakers. At a time when more women were working in factories, sloyd education was a way to transfer

\(^77\) See for example Gertrud Ingers, Hemgiften: Hemmets linneförråd förr och nu (Stockholm: LT, 1951), which came in new editions 1952 and 1960.

\(^78\) Wärn Bugge and Ralf, eds. Bosättning (1955), 49. Swedish text: “Det är också en stor glädje att själv ha gjort saker till hemmet, man aktar dem särskilt och blir därmed även rädd om hemmets övriga inventarier.” In the 1944 setting-up home brochure Bosättning, there is a loom in one of the images of a suggested furnishing of a living room, next to another version of the same living room in which the loom is replaced by a small wall-hanging shelf with a fall-front ad a Windsor-type chair. Bosättning (Stockholm: Sveriges Riksbank, 1944), 21.
knowledge and also teach working-class girls cleanliness, work discipline, and thrift through handicraft.\textsuperscript{79} The setting-up-home brochure promoted rag rugs, as they were easy to weave. Such carpets, woven of rags from worn-out clothes, also evoked Carl Larsson’s turn-of-the-century paintings of his rural home in Sundborn, which remained the traditional image of Swedish homes. The reformer Ellen Key had also favored weaving and promoted the Larsson home as a model for modern living in her 1899 publication \textit{Beauty for All}.\textsuperscript{80} Other weaving projects in the setting-up-home brochure included household linens, such as towels and tablecloths, as well as upholstery textiles, curtains, bedspreads, and cowhair carpets. “Sewing curtains and lampshades is fun and not difficult,” the brochure stated in a cheerful tone to the woman about to get married and receiving a setting-up-home loan in 1950s Sweden.\textsuperscript{81} It is clear that the government saw the primary role of the woman at that time to be a homemaker, busy at home caring for children and making household goods. In many of the apartment buildings constructed in the 1930s–1950s, there were community spaces where men and women could work on looms and at a carpenter’s bench.\textsuperscript{82}

The inclusion of a loom and a carpenter’s bench in \textit{Allt i Hemmet}’s kitchen competition further emphasized an ongoing promotion of homecraft at a time when Sweden was becoming increasingly urbanized. The loom was a link between the


\textsuperscript{81} Wærn Bugge and Ralf, eds., \textit{Bosättning} (1955), 49. Swedish text: “Att sy gardiner och lampskärmar är roligt och inte svårt.”

\textsuperscript{82} Rudberg, “‘Stäng in arkitekten i kokvrån!’,” 225. The setting-up-home brochure suggested that models and advice could be found in the shops of the National Association of Swedish Handicraft Societies (Svenska hemsöjdsföreningarnas riksförbund), both in terms of weaving and carpentry. Wærn Bugge and Ralf, eds., \textit{Bosättning} (1955), 49.
homecraft movement and a significant feature of the Swedish Modernist movement. It was apparent at both the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition and the Swedish pavilion at the 1939 New York World’s Fair, where handwoven textiles were prominently displayed in model interiors. In New York, a loom was featured in a combined living room and kitchen intended for a farm worker and his family, denoting the handicraft economy of the countryside and the woman’s role in providing the household textiles.83

The carpenter’s bench in the Allt i Hemmet competition also evoked associations of the craft education offered in Swedish schools that every pupil had learned since the 1880s.84 Founding educator Otto Salomon thought that woodwork was a means of teaching the child, (meaning a boy) to read instructions, work with accuracy, and cultivate a good work discipline.85 For Lena Larsson, however, it was the creativity that the carpenter’s bench could stimulate that was important.86

Like the loom, the carpenter’s bench illustrated the concept of productive leisure, which historian Steven M. Gelber explores in an American context. Craft as a hobby was a perfect antidote to what many middle-class people saw as the potential dangers of

84 Sven G. Hartman, Handens pedagogik: kulturav och utveckling inom skolslöjden (Linköping: Linköpings universitet, 1995). It was not compulsory until 1955, but most pupils had had sloyd long before.
86 Already as an intern with the Modernist interior design firm Futurum in 1939, Larsson included a carpenter’s bench that received a lot of attention in the press when furnishing a studio for an 11-year-old-boy and his father in a home exhibition. The founders of Futurum, Margaretha Köhler and Marie-Louise Idestam-Blomberg were particularly interested in designing for children and making the interiors child-friendly, which came to influence Lena Larsson throughout her career such as in the interior at H55. Annica Kvint, “Vem är vem?,” in Home Sweet Home: Möblerade berättelser, Liljevalchs catalog no. 494, ed. Annica Kvint (Stockholm: Liljevalchs, 2013), 110, 112; Eklund Nyström, Futurum, 249-53.
idleness in an industrializing, capitalist economy.\textsuperscript{87} From being a hobby for middle-class women, many working-class women became interested in leisure crafts especially during the interwar handicrafts revival.\textsuperscript{88} Men became increasingly interested in leisure crafts in the twentieth century as well, and especially in the U.S. after World War II. Gelber explains men’s interest in craft as a hobby as a way to create a sphere of domestic masculinity—a male realm within the household that often took the form of a basement workshop. By the 1950s, the “do-it-yourself” (DIY) movement transformed home repair into a male hobby, thus giving suburban men roles that did not challenge gender-normative roles in the home. Hobbies also bridged the gap between work and home in the twentieth century, bringing the values of the workplace into the domestic sphere. The home became a place of productive leisure for both women and men, Gelber explains.\textsuperscript{89} Crafts also brought physical pleasure, what John Ruskin called “joy in labor,” a sense of accomplishment, and a creative outlet while affirming the work ethic of industrial capitalism.\textsuperscript{90}

Productive leisure was also an important feature of ideal life in Sweden. The long-established traditions of learning craft skills in Swedish schools—and the reinforcement of contributing to the household through making textiles and furniture—had a different cultural significance. The hobby was not practiced in a garage off the suburban house, but rather in the kitchen, along with other family activities.

\textsuperscript{87} Steven M. Gelber, \textit{Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 1-5.
\textsuperscript{89} Gelber, \textit{Hobbies}, 268-99.
Allt i Hemmet’s kitchen competition illustrations showed a screwdriver and electric drill as well as a sewing machine and a loom. In the setting-up-home brochure from 1955, there is an image of a family in their living room—and visible on the wall behind them is an open cabinet with various carpentry tools and a drill—suggesting that the state assumed a refined level of competence in basic craft skill.91 (See fig. 2.14) Another image shows a woman by her sewing machine, probably in the living room. The setting-up-home brochure describes such a big table for writing, sewing, hobbies, etc., as “one of the most important pieces of furniture in a home . . . to work at and to socialize around” with storage space for paper, pens, and sewing stuff nearby.92 By the 1960s, the Ikea catalog began featuring sewing machines in interiors and eventually carpenter’s benches.93

A new type of handbook, Stora hjälpredan (The big guide), 1949, included practical advice regarding everything a family could do by itself to maintain the home, from furnishing, cleaning, mending, and laundry to carpentry, painting, and gardening. The handbook was a type of expanded setting-up-home book, which also included detailed information on wood-working with tools, basic construction, repairs, and drawings of shelves, tables, beds, and other simple pieces of furniture that one could make.94

91 Wearn Bugge and Ralf, eds., Bosättning (1955), 2.
94 Arthur Hald and Anna-Lisa Lyberg, eds., Stora hjälpredan: Boken om bostad och bohag (Göteborg: Wezäta förlag, 1949). Handbooks for all kinds of hobbies were popular, see for example “Bonniers handböcker” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 3, no. 4 (1958): 61.
Although there are only hands visible in many of the instructive images, the activities are clearly gender-defined. The editors, however, state that they have worked to strike a balance between what interests men and women respectively, specifying that the chapter on painting is not targeting men and the section on washing-up is not meant only for women.\footnote{Hald and Lyberg, eds., \textit{Stora hjälpredan}, 4. That handicraft production was still common in Sweden is confirmed by the omission of a chapter on weaving, which might have been expected in such a book, as opposed to painting and carpentry.} The Co-op’s setting-up-home book \textit{Vårt hem} suggests a practical approach by having a third of the book devoted to home repairs. Readers were encouraged to follow their desires, seeking finds from auctions and attics to repair, paint, and repaper. The pride of doing something yourself was pleasant, according to Kerstin Henriksson, who had asked sloyd teacher Bertil Ehn for the professional content and advice on which tools a household should own.\footnote{Henrikson, \textit{Vårt hem}, 96-99.} In a time of urbanization, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} and the advisory publications embraced the loom and the carpenter’s bench, both signifying rural, traditional crafts, and the contemporary notion of productive leisure through do-it-yourself activities.

\textit{Allt i Hemmet} Promotes Larger Kitchens Using Researcher’s Arguments

To strengthen the arguments for a family kitchen with space for work, relaxation and play, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} invited one of the most vocal and influential researchers on the home to contribute an article. Architect Lennart Holm had investigated living habits in his 1955 dissertation, \textit{Familj och bostad} (\textit{Family and dwelling}). He confirmed that all research on living habits, both in the countryside and in towns, showed that people used the kitchen for several tasks and functions, not just cooking and meals. It was the place for nearly all
work, childcare, and leisure pursuits, along with children’s play and homework, in addition to space for coffee guests and family togetherness. The reasons were practical, for the woman to concentrate all her duties into one room that is also hardy and easy to clean. There was also a tradition in Sweden to spend the day, and for many also the night, in the kitchen.

With this in mind, Holm confirmed that, for most people, it was too hard to change their living habits in order to use the living room more. In spite of architects' efforts to oppose to what they called the “unhygienic” large kitchen, Holm concluded, “One has tried to turn the kitchen into a small, highly efficient food laboratory and pushed the kitchen table into the living room and kitchen couch into the bedroom. But it does not really succeed.” He argued, “for most people it seems hard to give up the neat living room, the evening room of the adults” that is kept tidy and clean like a parlor. Those in need of space preferred to sleep in the kitchen rather than the living room, according to Holm and his research. Since the problem of lack of space was being solved, he expected that people would choose a better standard of dwelling, and the larger kitchen would be placed high among their wishes. Holm presented his ideas of a family kitchen as a “working center of the home,” placed next to a bathroom with laundry facilities. (Fig. 2.19) The kitchen he illustrated has cabinets according to the Swedish standard; a workplace by the window for sewing, ironing, and mending clothes; and storage, like the other family kitchens featured in the magazine.

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97 Lennart Holm, “Kan familjeköket bli verklighet?,” Allt i Hemmet 2, no. 3 (1957): 20, 84. Swedish text: “Man har försökt göra köket till ett litet högeffektivt matlaboratorium och knuffat in köksbordet i vardagsrummet och kökssoffan i sovrummet. Men det vill inte riktigt lyckas. . . . så tycks det vara svårt för flertalet att avstå från det prydliga vardagsrummet, de vuxnas kvällsrum.” His dissertation was published by the HFI, Familj och bostad: En redovisning av fem fältstudier i moderna svenska familjebostäder 1931-1934 (Stockholm: Hemmens forskningsinstitut, 1955).
Holm thought that new textile materials and access to cheaper washing machines for use at home would change laundry habits to a more continuous weekly laundry at home rather than a large once every month or second month. To this end, Holm placed a bathroom with “a washing sink (for the nylon laundry) and an automatic washing machine” next to the kitchen. The automatic washing machine in Holm’s plan was extremely modern at the time, notwithstanding the many advertisements for washing machines featured in the magazine.

In the drawing illustrating Holm’s article, the “ideal” woman is busy. Wearing a large apron, she stands with her hands in the sink in the bathroom while looking out toward the kitchen, meeting the eyes of her daughter, an older schoolgirl sitting down by the kitchen table reading a book. The mother might also catch a glimpse of her younger child, who sits on the floor pulling out a drawer filled with small building blocks and other toys in the desk under the sewing machine by the window. The ideal homemaker appears to subscribe to the idea of no idle hands, doing laundry at the same time as she is cooking something on the stove, watching the children, and completing a project at the sewing machine. The work ethic corresponds to an ideal of rational consumption and thrift. It is the woman’s sewing machine, fabric, scissors, and needles that are spread out on the bench.

In terms of furnishings, there is a mixture between traditional and modern. Although there is the rational, standardized kitchen with its space-saving hanging dish rack, the Eames-style work-chair by the sewing machine, and similarly modern office-type lamp,

wall-mounted bookshelves, tubular-steel three-legged stool, and the Swedish standard Bakelite telephone, there are also traditional references, such as the stick-back chairs and the striped rag rug. While the work-chair, dish rack, stick-back chairs, and the standardized kitchen units were also featured in the kitchen publication of the HFI, they left the easily cleaned linoleum floors bare, most likely for practical and hygienic reasons. By contrast, Holm’s rag-rug was a nod to the traditional country kitchen in addition to the spaciousness of his family kitchen.

The magazine found further support for the family kitchen in Holm’s investigation of unhappy inhabitants of the experimental apartments in Baronbackarna in Örebro, built in 1952–1955.\(^99\) There, the ideal of a large room for the family’s daily activities—the living room—was tested, showing that it had not yet been accepted in spite of nearly 25 years of promotion through home exhibitions, study circles, and publications.

The winners of the Baronbackarna competition, architects Per-Axel Ekholm and Sidney White, had designed the apartments with the idea of an allrum, a room for the whole family and their daily activities, as a way to reform the living habits of the household and to get as many rooms as possible on the allocated square meters.\(^100\) In the all-room, there would be space for eating, children’s play, reading, and the mother’s workspace, including built-in cabinets for sewing equipment. The apartments were 60 square meters and, in order to fit in two bedrooms, the kitchen did not have room for an eating area, which was planned for the all-room next door, separated by a sliding glass door.

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\(^{100}\) Rudberg, “1940-1960,” 83, 90
The results, however, were not what they had expected: “We want a fine living room and a large kitchen, at least big enough for us to sit there and eat!” was the message from the rather dissatisfied inhabitants in Holm’s investigation. Allt i Hemmet concluded that the people in Baronbackarna “and probably the whole country, do not want a little laboratory kitchen, not even if it is connected to a living room. Furthermore, people do not want their only nice big room to be a workspace and playground.” The reaction was similar to that in England, where postwar public housing replaced the conventional separation between the little-used parlor and the all-purpose living room with an open plan.

The magazine saw the results of the investigation as more evidence of the decision to focus on the idea of the family kitchen, culminating in the kitchen competition. The idea built on the principle of joining “the kitchen and all-room into one and have a small parlor as well. It is simple: take some floor space from the living room (which is used as a parlor) and place it in the kitchen instead. Then the idea of the all-room will work—in the family kitchen,” Allt i Hemmet stated. The investigation in Baronbackarna that Allt
i Hemmet referred to, and the increase in average size of apartments in the latter half of the 1950s, roused public opinion for larger kitchens with substantial space for eating.\(^{105}\)

**Promoting the Family Kitchen at Interbau, Berlin 1957**

At the Internationale Bauausstellung (International Building Exhibition, Interbau) in Berlin in 1957, “the biggest housing exhibition in the world after the war,” *Allt i Hemmet* had another opportunity to promote the family kitchen.\(^{106}\) The fact that Larsson was selected to design one of six Swedish apartments at this large exhibition further confirmed her role as an influential designer and the impact of her work for *Allt i Hemmet*. It was clear that Nordic architecture and design were having a broad influence on international design.

Interbau took place in West Berlin at a time when East Berlin had experienced the construction of large-scale Soviet-style buildings. Interbau has thus been interpreted as a political critique of the East, a milestone for the reintegration of (West) German architects into international discourse, and a breakthrough for modernism in West Germany.\(^{107}\) In a desire to rebuild and modernize the city after World War II, the Interbau started with a competition for the ground plan of the neighborhood followed by the invitation of internationally renowned architects to design individual buildings. Among the 53 architects representing 14 countries were Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Max Taut—all participants in the significant 1927 Weissenhofsiedlung Exhibition in

\(^{105}\) Rudberg, “1940-1960,” 90.


Stuttgart—as well as Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobsen, and Oscar Niemeyer. The American contribution was a congress hall designed by Hugh A. Stubbins. Architectural historian Florian Urban argues, however, that the significance of this and the Hauptstadt Berlin, another competition of the era, lies not so much in the promotion of modern architecture as in the establishment in Berlin of a new “organic” design paradigm in line with the principles of modernist planning as outlined in Le Corbusier’s 1932 Athens Charter.

Separating the functions, tower-and-slab buildings were placed in the middle of green spaces, whereas commercial districts were grouped around shopping centers. Vehicular and pedestrian routes were separated, the street plan was redesigned, and historic residential buildings were demolished. Swedish architectural critic Gotthard Johansson pointed out that the city planning of Hansaviertel had rightfully been criticized, but that one had to keep in mind that the same principles were used in the new suburbs of Stockholm with its domination of high-rise buildings in a parklike environment.

The Nordic presence among the participating architects and interior designers at the Interbau is a testimony to the development of the field in Scandinavia and the interest it has aroused since the 1930s through events such as the World’s Fairs in Paris and New York, the Milan Triennale, and travelling Scandinavian Design exhibitions in the U.S. By comparison, there was no Nordic architect present at the 1927 Stuttgart Exhibition and no Nordic influence in the interior design of the model apartment in that period. Mia Seeger, director of the German Design Council, pointed out that it would be unthinkable in 1957

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108 Ibid., 367; Gotthard Johansson, “Interbau Berlin 1957,” *Form* 53, no. 6-7 (1957): 143.
110 Ibid., 358.
to ignore the Nordic influence.\textsuperscript{112} What is particularly Swedish, according to her, is the certainty with which the apartments have been furnished according to the needs and ways of living of different types of families.\textsuperscript{113}

Die Stadt von morgen, the City of Tomorrow, was the theme of an exhibition within Interbau with ideas for future living, further confirming that Allt i Hemmet’s family kitchen followed international ideals. Swedish design critic Ulf Hård af Segerstad reported in Form that Interbau presented the future city as a place of larger and more flexible apartments, with small rooms for silence and relaxation and at least one large room for family togetherness. Ideally, the exposition argued, the dwelling should provide room for creative work in a hobby room and a garden.\textsuperscript{114} In view of this statement of a future domesticity, Allt i Hemmet’s general promotion of the large family kitchen, ideally with a carpenter’s bench, and a smaller “parlor” for the adults, was in line with international housing ideals of the time.

Larsson incorporated the concept of the family kitchen in the apartment she was commissioned to furnish in the Swedish building, designed by architects Fritz Jaenecke and Sten Samuelsson. Larsson took her chance to promote the family kitchen “in the spirit of Allt i Hemmet,” combining the kitchen and living room, while surprisingly turning the biggest room into a fine master bedroom with comfortable seating furniture.

\textsuperscript{112}Mia Seeger, “Med familjens behov som ledstjärna,” Form 53, no. 6-7 (1957): 156. Mia Seeger was the director of Rat für Formgebung, the German Design Council, initiated by the West German Federal Parliament and founded by the Federation of German Industry and several firms in 1953. Barbara Hahlweg, “German Design Council – a look back at 60 years of design culture,” accessed March 28, 2020, http://www.german-design-council.cn/file/Markenbuch_60Jahre_Historie_EN.pdf. Josef Frank participated in Stuttgart, but this was before he had moved to Sweden.

\textsuperscript{113}Seeger, “Med familjens behov som ledstjärna,” 156.

\textsuperscript{114}Ulf Hård af Segerstad, “Vi bygger alla framtidens stad,” Form 53, no. 6-7 (1957): 148.
and wall-to-wall carpeting so as to create a relaxing space for the parents.\textsuperscript{115} The importance of the family, and especially the children, were Larsson’s priority. The mother in her imaginary family is described as unconventional, as guests may sit down in the family kitchen, where the children’s drawings are featured. She places two tables in the space so that nothing needs to be cleared away just because it is time to eat. (Figs. 2.20-23) The image from the exhibition interior shows different games and a musical instrument on the table intended for activities, similar to her “hobby corner” of the kitchen featured in \textit{Allt i Hemmet} the following year.\textsuperscript{116} It should be noted that the children have their own rooms, one for the two girls and one for the boy; in spite of this, they are encouraged to play in the combined living room and kitchen, according to Larsson’s plan, which by placing space for play at the center follows American postwar dwellings.\textsuperscript{117}

While the family kitchen did not surprise visitors to the exhibition, it was the Swedish standard kitchen that attracted attention, according to Fredriksson’s enthusiastic report: “In Berlin Lena Larsson showed the world the Swedish family kitchen, the large open-plan kitchen and all-room.”\textsuperscript{118} Above all, it was herds of German women who came:

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 14-18; Marianne Fredriksson, interiors by Lena Larsson, “Vi sitter i köket,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet}, no. 8 (1958): 28-35. Through a story of an ordinary day in a family, at least ten different activities take place on the kitchen table.
\textsuperscript{117} Ogata, \textit{Designing the Creative Child}, 73.
And how did they react? Hardly at all. The German housewives basically thought that the sinks and cabinets of the little ordinary Swedish standard kitchen were all so wonderful that they could take pride of place in any living room. They reveled in drawers and cabinets, tested the height of the sink, measured counters and some beamed with admiration while others boiled over of delight. . . . One of them said: “A people who has such sinks in every house must respect its women.” But the kitchen in the living room did not cause any German uprising, whereas it had aroused such storms, when a brave man some ten years ago thought it out aloud for the first time in Sweden.\(^{119}\)

It is clear that Fredriksson is proud of the attention that the family kitchen received at Interbau. The “brave man” who had tested the idea before is most likely G. A. Berg, who had designed a combined living room and kitchen for one of the interiors in the Swedish pavilion at the New York World’s Fair in 1939.\(^{120}\) In 1957, however, the big kitchen had been discussed for a long time and was widely accepted. “The resolute decision to skip the wall between kitchen and living room for active family togetherness did not shock anyone any longer.”\(^{121}\)

From another viewpoint, having compared the apartment plans at Interbau, the critic Kristian Romare of Form highlighted the dining area in the kitchen as something typically Swedish. In line with Fredriksson’s and Wӓgner’s arguments, he referred to the kitchen as “our natural everyday meeting place,” noting that he did not see such a layout anywhere else than in the Swedish building and in a German wish list for the dwelling of

\(^{119}\) Ibid., 14, 16. Swedish text: “Och hur reagerade de? Knappast alls. De tyska husmödrarna tyckte helt enkelt att det lilla vanliga svenska standardkökets diskbänkar och skåp var så i alla avseenden underbara, att de prydde sin plats i vilket vardagsrum som helst. De frossade i lådor och skåp, provade diskbänkshöjder, mätte arbetsbänkar och somliga sken av stum beundran medan andra kokade över av förtjusning... För som en av tyskorna sade: Ett folk som har sådana diskbänkar i varena hus måste ha respekt för sina kvinnor. Men köket i rummet, som rev upp stormar, när en modig man för ett tiotal år sedan för första gången tänkte tanken högt här hemma, väckte som sagt ingen tysk uppståndelse.”

\(^{120}\) Perers, “G.A. Berg,” 94-98.

tomorrow in the exhibition hall. Above all, he was surprised by how architects on the continent neglected what had become a habit in Swedish housing: the orientation of kitchen and bedroom, the realistic planning of the homemaker’s workspace from the light and spacious kitchen to the washroom and bathroom, and an open mind toward planning for the family’s activities both together and in seclusion.\footnote{Kristian Romare, “Att bo på Interbau,” \textit{Form} 53, no. 6-7 (1957): 151. Swedish text: “den hos oss naturliga samlingspunkten till vardags.”}

All the aspects the critic thought that Swedes took for granted were in line with Larsson’s interior at Interbau. Perhaps it was so typically Swedish in its furnishings that \textit{Form} did not bother to describe it in more than an illustration of the kitchen with a caption describing it as “a three-bedroom apartment for an ordinary family of three children with an all-room as a common space for work and togetherness.”\footnote{Ibid., 153. Swedish text: “fyrrummare för en helt vanlig trebarnsfamilj hade ett allrum som gemensamt utrymme för arbete och samvaro.” According to the caption, Lena Larsson was commissioned by Bra bohag.}

In corporatist Sweden, a range of organizations and institutions united in a common drive for better housing founded on research and rational thinking and developed the standard kitchen, which was then broadly promoted by commercial actors such as Ikea and \textit{Allt i Hemmet}. By promoting the family kitchen, however, the magazine challenged the prevailing ideal of the \textit{living room} as the space for the family’s daily activities. By referencing a farm kitchen, the magazine and the other advisory publications also promoted furniture and crafts that reflected a longing for a peasant past in a time of urbanization.
Chapter Three

Living in the Living Room?

The purpose of the living room in Swedish households still posed a problem in the 1950s. Was the living room a space for the whole family to live in, or did it play a different role? Although the 1954 God bostad reaffirms that the living room “shall be the central gathering place of the family,”¹ the housing board recognized that: “In reality, the living room is not much used daily, rather it is the evening room of the parents, where the children are not supposed to be.”² Taking a practical approach, the housing board understood that Swedes perceived the living room as having a “neater, tidier quality than other rooms,” despite the fact that “housing experts would also agree that an all-round use of the living room—in the full sense of the word (i.e., vardagsrummet, or everyday room)—was desirable.”³ The promotion of the living room, which had been so central in numerous home exhibitions and advice publications of the 1930s and 1940s, had still not fulfilled its mission.

¹ Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1954), 10 and 23. Swedish text 1954: “Vardagsrummet är enligt vedertaget språkbruk det av bostadens rum, vanligen det största, som skall vara familjens centrala samlingsplats. Livet här tänkes omfatta vila och avkoppling, förströelsesysselsättning och lättare arbete samt umgänge med gäster.” The housing board argued that the living room should be at least eighteen square meters, as most people desired at least one room that gave an impression of spaciousness. Ibid., 10, 12.
³ Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1954), 12. Swedish text: "Bostadsexpertisen torde också vara enig om att en allsidig användning av vardagsrummet i ordets egentliga mening i och för sig är önskvärd, även om detta rum av lätt insedda skäl har en mera prydlig och 'välstädad' karaktär än de andra."
While the housing board did not take a stand in the 1954 *God bostad, Allt i Hemmet*, the Co-op, and the official setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning* actively promoted the presence of children in common living spaces. But the magazine also challenged the architect’s vision by defending the parlor—in many ways, as we have seen, the antithesis of the living room—although never at the expense of the children.

This chapter discusses the furniture types that contributed to the “neat and tidy” character of the living room, promoted by Ikea and Bra Bohag. I also consider the arguments used for including children in family activities set in the living room. These became more complex with the arrival of television, which changed the discussion; by the late 1950s, the living room’s role as an evening room for the entire family had been more fully established. Finally, I will observe the discussions of class, taste, and historic styles, out of which Ikea came to exemplify how home furnishings were becoming more modern in this period, notwithstanding the survival of one historic style—the Gustavian.

**A Matter of Taste and Class**

Home exhibitions and other efforts had promoted modern, flexible furnishing in the interwar period. Nevertheless, furniture suites had remained popular, in large part due to Ikea’s presentation of such suites as embodying unified class and taste. Already in 1951, with the company’s first catalog, Ikea had presented dining sets, including historic revival styles. The catalog featured three spreads with three dining room suites, including one in “Renaissance” style, made of “antique-treated oak with hand-carved ornaments.”

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4 See chapter one.

5 *Ikéa, Katalog 1951* (Agunnaryd: Ikea, n.d.), 32-33. Swedish text: “antikbehandlad ek med handskurna ornament.” It did not have any name and was just called “Ekmöbel i renässansstil” (furniture suite of oak in
3.1) The dining set comprised a dining table, a combined silver and linen cabinet, a sideboard, and upholstered chairs, which combined to represent a common type of complete furniture suite, a product of the furniture trade. Arguing through class, Ikea promoted furniture suites in line with economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen’s classic theory of conspicuous consumption, playing to the way lower classes seeking to gain status by emulating upper classes. In this way, Ikea linked good taste with both the standards of the upper class and historic styles: “The heavy, distinguished Renaissance style bears witness to good taste and culture. The solid workmanship will preserve it for generations.” Seen through the eyes of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Ikea’s argument refers to the cultural capital by which a certain class distinguishes itself within a hierarchical system of taste and status.

The company chose names for its sets that underscored these consumer motivations: it introduced the shiny mahogany dining set Aristokrat (The aristocrat) in 1955 under the headline “Bears witness to good taste and refined culture,” followed by a description of a “style that never goes out of fashion” and ending the promotional text with a catchy phrase in bold: “Model Aristocrat—truly distinguished furniture for the highest

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7 Ikéa, Katalog 1951, 33. Swedish text: “Den tunga förnäma modellen i renässans vittnar om god smak och kultur. Det gedigna utförandet bevarar den under generationer.” It did not have any name and was just called “Ekmöbel i renässanstil” (furniture suite of oak in Renaissance style). The complete suite cost 930 kronor, which was much more than the other two dining sets in the same catalogue; Visthall sold for 346 kronor; and Mary 585 kronor. The individual pieces could also be bought separately.
pretensions.”9 The Chippendale seating group got a similar treatment, described as a “representative group that bears witness to culture and good taste” and as giving a “distinguished, representative touch and atmosphere to your home. It will be admired and envied by your friends and acquaintances.”10

The company’s presentation of its products foregrounded the furniture’s representative value, while also emphasizing the envy the buyer would inspire in those who visited a home furnished with such dining sets. In this way, Ikea stood on the side of popular taste and expectations, in opposition to experts who condemned the use of furniture as a status symbol and purchasing for reasons other than a buyer’s actual lifestyle and real needs. This also underscores the class-oriented society that Sweden remained, although Ikea had chosen the aristocracy rather than the intellectual middle class as the arbiters of taste.

The themes of class and “good taste” were taken up in a comprehensive survey of dwelling habits, published in 1955, the same year Ikea promoted its Aristokrat suite. According to the SAR and the SSF, it was “above all the intellectual middle class that had understood how to combine old and new in a personal way.” The study concluded that many of the “most tasteful homes” blended inherited and “bachelor” furniture with what was purchased for the marriage.11 In mixing old and new home furnishings, these

10 Ikéa, Inredningskatalog 1956, 34. Swedish text: “Modell Chippendal—representativ grupp som bär vittne om kultur och god smak . . . ger förmäm, representativ prägel och atmosfär åt Ert hem. Den kommer att beundras och avundas av vänner och bekanta.” The suite of sofa, two upholstered armchairs, and a table cost 2,410 kronor. Ikea launched the Chippendale seating group the year before, but it was not ready in time for the printing of the 1955 catalog, so there was just a short description of three lines and a sentence saying that a plate could be sent upon demand. Ikéa, Katalog 1955, 32.
11 Gotthard Johansson, ed., Bostadsvanor och bostadsnormer: Svenska Arkitekters Riksförbunds och Svenska Slöjdföreningens bostadsutredning, Dwelling Habits and Housing Norms: The Housing
ideal and middle-class homes answered personal needs while also living up to the ideal of thrifty and rational consumption of the time. In contrast, of the 100 households that were part of the housing investigation, 81 had a complete furniture suite of the type sold by Ikea, inspired by the nineteenth-century bourgeois fashion of furnishing each room in a specific style.\textsuperscript{12}

Although the report acknowledged the importance of “personal ability or lack of ability to create a home interior that naturally meet real needs and actual lifestyle,” there was no doubt that the furniture suites themselves “played an important role, and in some cases, a conclusive role” in giving the home an “impersonal, stereotypical, and conventional” impression.\textsuperscript{13} Craftsmanship and the “honest” use of materials were arguments against the furniture suites of historic revival styles.

\textbf{Authenticity and Functionality versus Superficial Style}

In their popular book \textit{Heminredning}, Lena Larsson and Elias Svedberg compare such a suite to “putting a straitjacket on family life from the beginning,” favoring instead the purchase of single pieces according to the changing needs of the family.\textsuperscript{14} In an


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 154. There were 52 working class and 48 middle class families in the survey, which researched the correlation between the layout of the dwelling and its use, including furnishings and kitchens. Lena Larsson conducted field research in 1942-43, and a special committee researched kitchens in 1943-44. The results were then compiled and interpreted to form the basis for future planning. A model kitchen was demonstrated from 1945, and then the HFI and the SIS developed it into the standard kitchen. Ibid., 8-13.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 153. Swedish text: “opersonligt, stereotypt och konventionell” and “Mycket beror naturligtvis även här på den personliga förmågan eller oförmart att skapa en hemmiljö, som på ett naturligt sätt ansluter sig till de verkliga behoven och den faktiska livsforingen, men otvivelaktigt är, att också själva möbeltypen härvid spelar en betydande och i vissa fall avgörande roll.”

imagined dialogue with the reader—a method sometimes also used in *Allt i Hemmet*—they argue for buying furniture that serves a purpose in the reader’s home. “But we want to have *style* in our home,” the reader objects, expressing the desire for solid workmanship that looks expensive.15 Larsson and Svedberg address the theme so prominent in Ikea’s marketing, the durable craftsmanship available in a “Renaissance” suite: “The solid workmanship will preserve it for generations.”16 Larsson and Svedberg wish to counteract this impression: while the reader might think the sculptured details in such furniture are handmade—or that the Renaissance or Baroque furniture are, if not copies, at least true to the style—“The truth is: *You are being cheated!*”17

An illustration in their book shows a machine that rapidly manufactures five complicated, sculptured chair legs with the caption: “The machine shall not imitate the work of the hand.”18 On the next page, Larsson and Svedberg further convey their message by comparing an authentic Renaissance cabinet and a chair with an illustration, which is very similar to the “Renaissance” suites in the Ikea catalogs.19 (Fig. 3.2) Their direct dialogue with the reader emphasizes their educational effort: “Compare these images! It is not difficult to see how clumsily and soullessly the details are distorted in...

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19 *Ikéa, Katalog* (1951), 32-33; (1952), 58; (1953), 57; (1954), 49; (1955), 67; (1956), 69-70; (1957), 67. As an indication that Ikea was moving in a more fully modern direction, the last time a Renaissance dining set was featured was in 1957, whereas the year before there had been two Renaissance groups and one similar. Out of the 17 dining sets in the 1957 catalog, most were modern ones in teak and other woods, two were Gustavian, *Desirée and Bellman*, and one Renaissance, *Fylgia.*
the furniture suite below compared with the stylistically correct design of the real Renaissance cabinet and chair to the right.”

Their conclusion, then, was that “honesty is the best policy”; in other words, the consumer should avoid dishonest, machine-made copies of handmade models in favor of machine-made furniture designs that are in tune with the possibilities of the machine. Such serially produced furniture of modern design were also promoted in *Allt i Hemmet* and *Bosättning*.

The preference of honesty toward material and method over mass-produced simulacra has its roots in the British design reform movement of the nineteenth century, championed by A. W. N. Pugin, John Ruskin, and William Morris. The educational method of comparing seemingly hair-raising examples with a current ideal also has a long tradition, as we have seen in the introductory chapter, and it was still a living model in the 1950s.

As a response to Larsson’s and Svedberg’s attack on Renaissance revival furniture of poor quality, Ikea launched the *Original Haupt N.M.* in 1955. (Fig. 3.3) It was an exact copy of a Gustavian dresser produced by Georg Haupt, the most famous Swedish cabinetmaker of the late eighteenth century, in the collection of the Nordiska museet. With a price of 750 kronor, it was quite expensive compared with another model, *Attila*, a veneered “luxury dresser” in shiny mahogany featured at 172 kronor on the same catalog.

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20 Larsson and Svedberg, *Heminredning* (1955), 17. Swedish text: “Jämför de här bilderna! Det är inte svårt att se hur klumpigt och själlöst detaljerna är förvanskade på möblemanget nedan i jämförelse med den stilhistoriskt riktiga utformningen på skåpet (t.h.) och stolen (nedan t.h.) som är av äkta renässansutformning.” The images and text are almost exactly the same in the original version of *Heminredning* (Stockholm: Forum, 1947), 20.

21 Ibid. Swedish text: “Ärlighet varar längst.”

22 See chapter one.

As if arguing with Larsson and Svedberg, the Ikea catalog emphasized that “it is completely artisanal” in its production with “really stylish inlay” in various tropical woods; it was also available in a simpler version. Out of the fifteen dressers in the 1955 Ikea catalog, which were not part of complete bedroom suites, six were in Rococo, Louis XVI, or Gustavian styles. Dressers inspired by historic styles were popular and had been produced throughout the twentieth century in Sweden, but the Haupt copy was the most popular of the Gustavian style; Ikea sold it until 1968.

Evolving Styles, Evolving Taste

As it targeted a broad spectrum of customers, Ikea met both conventional and modern taste. Dining sets remained popular, and by 1955 the number of those featured in the catalog had increased to fourteen, although only three were inspired by historic styles. They were available as sets of a table, four chairs, and a cabinet, in some cases also including a sideboard. Although it was possible to buy individual pieces, the package price and images conveyed that the idea was to buy a complete suite, as demonstrated in the 81 of 100 homes observed in the housing investigation published in 1955.

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24 Ikéa, Katalog 1955, 100.
25 Ibid. Swedish text: “Den är helt hantverkstillverkad med verkligt stilfulla inläggningar i jakaranda, palisander honduras, bubinga, gurana m.fl. tropiska träslag.”
26 Ibid., 98-103.
28 Ikéa, Katalog 1955, 56-69. The names were a mixture of Greek mythology, Pallas and Nike; Nordic mythology, Balder (Renaissance-inspired suite); the symbol of Sweden, Svea; the eighteenth-century poet, Bellman (Gustavian-style suite); the Aristokrat, and Swedish and other European places, Rindö, Laxvik, Falsterbo, Djursholm, Dalby, Vårby, Oxford, and Milano (Renaissance-inspired suite). At this time, Ikea did not promote Swedishness in its marketing.
In contrast, the nine companies behind Bra Bohag, collaborating since 1956, reaffirmed in their first catalog that “as you know, complete furniture suites belong to the past.” At the same time, they acknowledged the advantage of such suites, namely that the different parts of an interior furnished with suites were attuned to each other. Aiming to help the consumer to combine pieces that fit together, the nine companies joined to offer “attuned interior design with a quality guarantee.” This perspective is clear when we review the magazine-like catalogs produced in the late 1950s. The impression is indeed one of unity, presenting a series of streamlined teak furniture combinable into groups for seating and dining, with matching sideboards and shelves for books and storage along the living room wall.

Like Ikea, Bra Bohag offered a similarly open approach toward consumer taste. Its catalog uses text reminiscent of the Ikea catalog’s aspiration to refinement through history and class: the exclusive seating groups by Dux are positioned as being “For you seeking the very best in comfort and at the same time desiring a harmonious home where the classic lines of the furniture give a distinguished atmosphere anchored in old traditions.” While one was called Manhattan, the other, Stocksund, referenced in its name and style a villa district created in the late nineteenth century for wealthy people moving away from Stockholm. (Fig. 3.4)

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By 1957, Ikea had discontinued the Chippendale and Aristocrat suites. This was also the last year that the Renaissance suite appeared in the catalog, the set no longer promoted as “representative” and demonstrating “refined taste”; instead, the marketing copy focused on its craftsmanship.31 Presenting elitism as the hallmark of taste was out of step with the sensibilities of a country that aimed to develop thoughtful middle-class consumers. Rather, it was the ideal of Danish design, a style favored by the middle class, that took the place of historic revival styles, as is apparent in the 1959 Ikea catalog: “Your friends will admire your good taste” regarding “the practical and pleasant Sorö group”.32 What remained of historicizing furniture suites were the light white- and gray-painted Gustavian dining sets, a historic style favored even in modernist Sweden, and the Rococo revival seating group.33

The Gustavian Style

The popularity of the Gustavian style, with its connotations of a Swedish life simpler than that of the gilded French eighteenth century, had been present in a romanticized version since the 1890s. The Gustavian ideal includes rag rugs and untreated wooden

32 Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog 1959 (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 8. After the introduction and some pages of curtains and other textiles, the seating group Sorö by Danish designer Arne Wahl-Iversen was the first furniture presented in the 1959 catalog, with the caption that, after just a few weeks, it had become number one on the wish list of seating groups at the exhibition in Älmhult. It featured teak, teak-colored beech, foam rubber, and foam plastic with woolen fabric. Swedish text: “Också Ni kommer att tycka om den praktiska och trivsamma Sorögruppen och Edra vänner att beundra Er goda smak.” Other examples: regarding TV furnishings, the Danish Modern-looking upholstered chair with armrests of teak-colored beech Zetti is promoted as “Some Zetti give character to the interior and bear witness of good taste,” 41. Swedish text: “Några Zetti ger karakter åt inredningen och vittnar om god smak.” The sofa table Largo of teak and oak “is created with You in mind who have great pretentions and open eyes for the new design of furniture. . . . Modern people with good taste choose their furnishings from Ikea,” 51. Swedish text: “Bord Largo hör till det bästa, skapat med tanke på Er som har stora pretentioner och öppen blick för den nya formgivningen i möbelvärlden. . . . Moderna människor med god smak väljer sin bosättning från Ikéa.”
33 Ibid., 108-09, 42-43.
floors, such as in Carl Larsson’s paintings from the Larsson home and the restoration of Gripsholm castle in the 1890s, Skansen’s acquisition of the Skogaholm manor house in the 1930s, and Ikea’s re-launch of Gustavian furniture in collaboration with the Swedish National Heritage Board in the 1990s. The two historic revival styles that survived the 1950s in the Ikea catalog were both from the eighteenth century, Rococo and Gustavian, though they were promoted in completely different ways.

While the early Ikea catalogs presented many pieces of furniture as pleasant, practical, and affordable, the Rococo items were associated with refinement and luxury, promoted with language like “distinguished Rococo table” and “Rococo dresser of luxurious workmanship.” In contrast, the introduction of its first Gustavian type of furniture in 1954 was presented with less bombastic language. The Swedish pearl-gray or bone-white version of Louis XVI style appears with a caption stating “There is nothing new under the sun. Here they go again, the old nice chairs with carved wheatsheaf detail—in a modern interior with a beautiful round mahogany table and a lacquered cabinet of the most modern cut. . . . A romantic interior for practical use.” (Fig. 3.5) To further enhance the dining set’s eighteenth-century touch, it was named Bellman, after a famous Swedish eighteenth-century poet and singer. The familiarity with which Ikea

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34 For further reading on the idealization of the 18th century and how museums and academics contributed to this in the 20th century, see Viktor Edman, Sjuttonhundratalet som svenskt ideal: Moderna rekonstruktioner av historiska miljöer (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2009); Mårdh, A Century of Swedish Gustavian Style; and Womack, “Nationellt och smakfullt,” “Möbler med stil och historia.”

35 Ikéa, Katalog 1952 (Agunnaryd: IKEA, n.d.), 94-95. Swedish text: “Förnämt rococobord,” “Rococobyrå i lyxutförande.” Ikea’s first Rococo revival pieces were a mirror with matching bracket lamps featured in the first catalog 1951 (along with a gilded wall-clock in Gustavian style), and in 1952 a “stylish” upholstered chair with matching coffee table and two veneered eighteenth-century-style dressers. Ikéa, Katalog (1951), 41, 56-57; (1952), 94-95.

presents “nice old chairs” that also work in a modern interior—recognized, perhaps, as a practical quality—indicates that the Gustavian could be an acceptable historic revival style even in a modern interior. This way of presenting the Rococo and Gustavian follows a modernist tradition that views Rococo as whimsical and illogical, whereas the Louis XVI, the international equivalent of Gustavian, is more acceptable in that it builds on classic tradition.

The Gustavian Bellman dining set proved so popular that Ikea introduced a similar dining set in 1957, _Desirée_, all in white with the same wheatsheaf and fluted details. The catalog explains that “many visiting customers have asked for a furniture suite in this style.”[^37] (Fig. 3.6) So durable was the style’s popularity that _Desirée_ was featured in the Ikea catalog until 1976. In line with the renewed interest in the eighteenth century, Bra bohag presented Carl Malmsten’s white-lacquered dining set _Ulfsparre_ in 1958, inspired by Gustavian furniture as a contrast to their teak-based assortment.[^38] The Gustavian style would form an ideal of timelessness in the 1960s.

**Vernacular Inspiration**

Following the wholesome approach, Ikea combined inspiration from the eighteenth century with the vernacular. With a rural touch, the 1955 series _Tranås_ included a solid stick-back chair lacquered in a chosen color and a gray gate-legged table, a space-saving model whose design was common since the eighteenth century, now surfaced with

[^37]: Möbel-Ikéa, _Inredningskatalog 1957_, 66. Swedish text: “Många av våra besökande kunder har bett om en möbel i den här stilen.” _Desirée_ was sold by Ikea until 1976 (from 1970 only in mahogany) and because of the popularity of such dining sets, the Nordic Museum acquired _Desirée_ in 2009, NM.0329818-20.

[^38]: Bra bohag, _Vi möblerar: En tidning för alla hemintresserade utgiven av Bra Bohag_ (Malmö: Bra bohag, 1958), 11. The producer was Bodafors. In the following catalog 1959-60 it had changed name to _Herrgården_ (The manor house). Bra bohag, _Bra bohag 1959-1960_, 9.
mahogany or teak to appeal to 1950s tastes. There was a pearl-gray corner cabinet with blue interior, also available in other color combinations. (Fig. 3.7) Rather than a furniture suite, Tranås comprised individual pieces of furniture that might have been taken from the pages of Allt i Hemmet, Bosättning, Heminredning, and Vårt hem.

With associations to both vernacular and eighteenth-century furniture, Ikea’s 1955 interior resembles an interior of the official setting-up-home brochure Bosättning from the same year. (Fig. 3.8) It also has a corner cabinet based on traditional cabinet-making, with vernacular-type stick-back chairs finished with eighteenth-century-inspired checkered fabric, and a wooden couch at the table large enough for work and leisure, according to the caption.\footnote{Wærn Bugge and Ralf, Bosättning (1955), 16.} Instead of phrases like “distinguished taste” and “representative” suite, through Tranås, Ikea appealed to those who want to be modern: “Modern people with good taste choose their household goods at Ikea—the specialist for complete interiors,” a message that was further elaborated in later catalogs.\footnote{Ikea, Katalog 1955, 70. Swedish text: “Moderna människor med god smak väljer sin bosättning hos Ikéa – specialisten på hela inredningar.” In the early years, the company spelled the name with é to emphasize the preferred pronunciation. That Ikea moved in a modern direction with individual pieces that could be combined is further shown in the 1959 catalog, where the dining section starts with ten individual chairs, combinable with different tables, instead of the usual start with the dining sets, Inredningskatalog 1959, 100-101. After the chairs, there were 17 dining sets, out of which some referred to Danish design, and the only historic styles were the two Gustavian suites, Bellman and Desirée.}

In terms of rhetoric, Ikea also followed the publications representing the “official” taste where typical features yielded a cozy and pleasant effect (in Swedish, trivsel, trivsam, and hemtrevlig, in Danish, hygge, in Norwegian, koselig, hyggelig): “Tranås—an interior signed by the modern designer—tastefully pleasant with cozy atmosphere in every detail.”\footnote{Ikea, Katalog 1955, 70. Swedish text: “Tranås—en interiör signerad av den moderne formgivaren—så där smakfullt hemtrevlig med trivsel i varje detalj.” Compare, for example, Heminredning (1955), 14: “Vi
late nineteenth century, which Johan Knutsson has described as the time of coziness
(*hemtrevnad*).\(^{42}\) Around 1900, design reformer Ellen Key wrote her influential *Beauty for
All*, and Carl Larsson painted watercolors of his home in Sundborn, Dalarna, a Swedish
version of an artist couple’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* inspired by the eighteenth century as well
as vernacular tradition.

**Giving Children Space in the Home**

As tastes in room furnishings changed, so too did the sense of who belonged in
which rooms, engaged in what activities. A living room with a dining set at its center
could easily turn into a haven for adults, as depicted in the official setting-up-home
brochure *Bosättning* in the 1940s: “Like so many of his friends, the poor boy stands in
the doorway to the family’s parlor where he is never allowed to be, as the furniture is too
fragile and crowded. He does not really have a place in the home.”\(^{43}\) (Fig. 3.9) The
straightforward message of the 1955 *Bosättning* was clear: “Children shall have the same
right to the home as their parents.”\(^{44}\)


Allt i Hemmet and the Co-op joined in the mission: “Do not push the children out of the living room,” ran a headline in the very first issue of Allt i Hemmet.\(^{45}\) The article was inspired by a recent investigation showing that parents did not allow the children in the living room, keeping them instead in the family’s shared bedroom in the typical one-bedroom apartment. According to the article, “The children are welcome to jump on the couch, ride cars on the carpet, and draw and paint on the dining table of the family George Keith in Årsta outside Stockholm. It does not matter at all, as the living room is ‘childproof’.”\(^{46}\) The Keith family had placed the parents’ beds in the living room, where they served as couches as well, and turned the other room into a nursery, thereby following the advice of the setting-up-home brochure.\(^{47}\) As Allt i Hemmet noted, adequate space was a social issue: according to housing investigations, children did not typically get their own space until families had three rooms. As of the late 1950s, the one-bedroom apartment remained the dominant dwelling configuration.\(^{48}\)

The Co-op went further than Allt i Hemmet, suggesting that children should get the biggest room in the house: the living room. For the parents, the smaller room would serve


\(^{46}\) Ibid., 21. Swedish text: “Barnen får gärna hoppa i soffan, köra bil på mattan och rita och måla på matsalsbordet hemma hos familjen George Keith i Årsta. Det har ingen betydelse alls, ty vardagsrummet är ’barnsäkert’.”


\(^{48}\) Marianne Fredriksson, text, Lena Larsson, interior, “Plats för lek,” Allt i Hemmet 2, no. 12 (1957): 17, 99. This article also suggested the parents to sleep in the living room and give the children the other room. Surveying play furniture, the article included a couple of images from the Milan Triennale of Alvar Aalto’s children’s furniture and a Danish nursery as well as Lena Larsson’s own play furniture, displayed at the H55 exhibition.
as their “peaceful corner when evening comes” where they could sleep in a sofa bed, according to Kerstin Henrikson in *Vårt hem* (1956).49

**Children and Parlor in the Two-Bedroom Apartment**

While waiting for their ideal of the large family kitchen to become official policy, *Allt i Hemmet* declared: “Teaching a completely new way to live in a two-bedroom apartment.” Marianne Fredriksson and Lena Larsson turned the living room into a family room, another room into a parlor, and the third room into a shared bedroom for the parents and two small children.50 The concept was reminiscent of Larsson’s apartment in the 1957 housing exhibition in Berlin, where the large kitchen was a family room and the parents’ bedroom also served as a parlor to which they could withdraw.51

With their capacity to create stories about seemingly real people in a lived environment, the editors invented Erk and Maja, the idealized couple in order to furnish and photograph an apartment to promote their ideal of modern family life.52 The approach, and the story, resembled the 1935 exhibition Home in the Collective House. The woman, Maja, had participated in the competition to find the ideal family kitchen and had apparently come to realize how conventionally her apartment was furnished,

52 Larsson and Fredriksson, “Hur Erk och Maja fick ‘storkök’ i vanlig trea,” 9-11, 100. There is a famous poem in Swedish, *Åktenskapsfrågan* by Gustaf Fröding from 1891, where Erk and Maja discuss what they want when they get married – from a horse and a cow to fine porcelain and a feather bed – but end up wondering how they would afford it. *Erk du, Maja du*, from the poem, was also the title of a 1954 promotional film in which Larsson and Gunnar Henriksson discuss the dwelling and home furnishings sponsored by Svenska Handelsbanken, a bank providing loans to build your own home; www.filmarkivet.se. In the home exhibitions of the 1930s and early 1940s, it was common to have fabricated stories of people living in the different apartments that were exhibited, see chapter one, and for example chapter 4 and 5 in Perers, “G. A. Berg.”
with a “fine, upholstered sofa and easy chair, expensive carpet, and all the family’s books in the large living room, a double bed and two bedside tables in a small bedroom, and a small nursery room with children’s beds and a cabinet for toys.” The family’s two-year-old daughter is not allowed to play in the living room, as the sofa is too precious, just as the drawing in *Bosättning* had illustrated. While Maja follows the official advice to use one of the rooms as a nursery, the four-year-old daughter does not want to play there, as it is small and too far from where her mother carries out her household activities. Furthermore, her husband Erk has stopped pursuing his woodcraft hobby because the kitchen is too small and the living room too neat. Maja states that she feels like a policeman guarding a living room full of prohibitions.

In this scenario, Fredriksson and Larsson created a story that illustrated their aims, including the dialogue between the couple quarreling about whether or not to throw out the fine sofa and carpet, before deciding: “Let’s turn the living room into a ‘large kitchen’ and the bedroom into a parlor.” As the children are so small, they feel that they could share bedroom for some years and then arrange a bed in the family room, without stating for whom. Erk and Maja’s solution means both less privacy for them and the loss of a bedroom in which some children’s play activities might have taken place.

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54 Ibid., 10; Wærn Bugge and Huldt, eds., *Bosättning* (1948) 23-25; (1955), 32-34. Obviously, a nursery is only possible in the one-bedroom apartment and, in the 1948 version, the children share the nursery with their mother, while the father sleeps in the living room. This separation of the parents is changed in the 1955 version, which states that the parents have to arrange for sleeping in the living room as the other room becomes a nursery when they have children.


56 Ibid., 11. “VI GÖR VARDAGSRUMMET TILL ETT ‘STORKÖK’ OCH SOVRUMMET TILL ETT FINRUM.”
By comparison, *Bosättning* had presented a conventional solution with separate bedrooms for the parents and children, and the third room as a living room for the whole family. The two-bedroom apartment was an increasingly realistic dream for Swedish families. By 1958 such apartments constituted half of the new housing production.

**A Space for the Whole Family**

Promoting a generous space for play at the center of the dwelling, as in the family kitchen and the all-room, *Allt i Hemmet* and the architects of Baronbackarna followed the same discourse as in the U.S. The difference was that the magazine challenged the vision of the architects by also including a parlor for the adults. At H55, Lena Larsson had developed the concept in a house with an all-room for hobbies, work, and play, while also including a living room that served as a parlor for the adults, in addition to a separate children’s room. There was a contrast between an active and a calm space.

The family room of Erk and Maja is described as “24 square meters for play and work,” featuring many of the requirements of the family kitchen that *Allt i Hemmet* so eagerly promoted. (Figs. 3.10-11) Instead of a conventional dining set, sofa, easy chairs,

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57 Wærn Bugge and Huldt, eds., *Bosättning* (1948), 27-33. Actually, this example comes from a small house, as it was so unusual with two-bedroom apartments—most people living in apartments had only one or two rooms, in which the children would get one and the parents would sleep in the living room, according to *Bosättning*. In the 1955 edition, *Bosättning* included neither a small house nor a two-bedroom apartment as a realistic option for the young family, only dwellings with one or two rooms, thus illustrating the general housing stock and focus on the construction of apartments rather than houses. Wærn Bugge and Ralf, eds., *Bosättning* (1955), 30-34.


and long bookshelf along the wall, the interior encouraged activities: the typewriter, sewing machine, and telephone are ready to use on two desks placed in the corner by the window. In this way, it resembles the Co-op's “active room” for a couple in Vårt hem, featuring two desks in a row in front of the window, with a swivel work chair, Windsor chair, corkboard, a relaxing daybed, and shelves.\(^{61}\) (Fig. 3.12) While one worktable was for Maja’s sewing projects, the other denotes the man’s domain where he can carry out his various productive leisure activities, namely woodcraft, according to the article, and a typewriter. A multipurpose table from the Co-op may be folded and placed along the wall as a prolongation of the desks.

The simple stick-back chair moved from the kitchen to the living room. Allt i Hemmet, Ikea, the Co-op, and state-supported publications all promoted modern living spaces inspired by vernacular tradition. The ideal presented here is far from the upholstered sofas and dining sets of conventional living rooms. Erk and Maja’s choice of furniture resembles how the architects had pictured the all-room in Baronbackarna—the stick-back couch and chairs, the conical lamp above a sturdy table, the String shelf with plastic-covered metal on its sides, and the sewing machine with its swivel work-stool.\(^{62}\) (Figs. 3.13-14) Erk and Maja’s stick-back chairs are the Lilla Åland (1942) by Malmsten, in whose school Lena Larsson had trained. Furthering a useful, non-conventional

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\(^{61}\) Henrikson, Vårt hem, 18-21. There was also a “calm room” for sleeping and reading. In 1958, the Co-op presented designer Sune Fromell’s modular series of adjustable desks, shelves, and cupboards called Växa med läxa (literally, “To grow with homework”). The idea was that the whole family would use the set in bedrooms, nurseries, living rooms, and the all-room, according to the brochure. The Co-op emphasized that the series received an award in a competition by the SSF, a sign that the concept suited the official ideal of furniture. Kooperativa Förbundet, Växa med läxa för barn och vuxna (Stockholm: Kooperativa Förbundet Möbelavdelningen, 1958), n.p; Kooperativa Förbundet, Växa med läxa – en byggbar möbelserie för hela familjen (Stockholm: KF, 1960), n.p.

approach, *Bosättning* features the same chair and five others offering “good support and proper body posture during different activities.”[63] (Fig. 3.15) As in the selection for the family kitchen competition, the choice of furniture in *Allt i Hemmet*’s family room have their equivalents in the 1955 *Bosättning*.[64]

The suggested activities and family togetherness around the table illustrated reflect the family-friendly living room shown in the 1955 *Bosättning* and its previous editions. (See fig. 2.14) Erk and Maja's room is painted in pastel colors and has a special cabinet for toys, crayons, and paper, including a fold-down writing desk where a child could sit down and draw or use the big blackboard on the wall next to the cabinet. A long display shelf for storybooks and a big board for children’s drawings and other items personalize the space. To instill a do-it-yourself spirit, instructions on how to build the children’s cabinet followed in the next issue.[65] Most of the floor was left for children’s play and toys.

**American Influences**

The authors in *Allt i Hemmet* kept an eye on developments regarding design and dwellings in the United States and especially those encouraging the children’s place in the home. For instance, the children’s play area in Erk and Maja’s home is conveniently placed next to the kitchen, near the mother’s supervision, as in a dwelling seen in postwar America.

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[64] Ibid., 13, 21-23, 25, 27, 30, 31, 33. The stick-back couch and chair, display shelf, folding table, rolling small table, and saddle-girth in seating furniture.

There are other signs that Larsson and Fredriksson’s choices are influenced by American developments. On the table of Erk and Maja’s family room, the authors display the House of Cards, a game designed in 1952 by Ray and Charles Eames.\textsuperscript{66} The choice of this game in the context is almost certainly deliberate. The Eameses designed the House of Cards game for children and adults to assemble a set of imaginatively decorated, slotted cards into a nearly infinite number of combinations, to encourage children to build houses from the cards and learn about structure.\textsuperscript{67}

Another influence from the U.S. was the general plan of the Larsson and Fredriksson family room, with its generous space for play at the center of the living space. Swedish dwellings had been influenced by American uses in the past, such as the rational kitchens based on Christine Frederick’s ideas and the Collective House inspired by American family hotels. As Fredriksson and Larsson took inspiration for the family kitchen from America, it is likely that they also followed playroom development. In contrast to the housing board’s passive role, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} actively promoted children’s right for play space in a room meant for the whole family and all their daily activities.

\textbf{A Space of Their Own: Allt i Hemmet Promotes the Parlor}

Contrary to the busy family room in the apartment of Erk and Maja, the parlor offered a relaxed and calm atmosphere. By promoting the parlor along with the family room in the same apartment, Fredriksson and Larsson used \textit{Allt i Hemmet} to recommend


\textsuperscript{67} Oral history interview with Ray Eames by Ruth Bowman for the Archives of American Art, July 28-Aug. 20, 1980, http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-ray-eames-12821. The game is an example of educational toys meant to encourage creativity, which were marketed in new ways in the postwar era of Cold War fears in America. Ogata, \textit{Designing the Creative Child}. 
designs that were both visionary and true to people’s needs and preferences, since the parlor did not belong in the official ideal as presented in the setting-up-home brochures of the time.

Like the Co-op’s “peaceful corner” for the parents, Fredriksson and Larsson described their parlor of ten square meters as an “undisturbed space for the parents alone.” They eschewed formal dining furniture in favor of furniture in which to relax, read, listen to the radio, and converse with a comfortable sofa, an upholstered armchair, a soft carpet covering nearly the whole floor, books, and a radio.\(^\text{68}\) (Fig. 3.16) Similarly, at Interbau in Berlin, Lena Larsson had created a haven for the parents with the finest upholstered furniture and wall-to-wall carpeting in the bedroom. Along the wall stand bookshelves with cabinets underneath and a fold-down writing surface with a chair. One shelf displays a couple of decorative ceramic vessels. In terms of furniture, Allt i Hemmet followed the official setting-up-home brochure; this type of wall arrangement was promoted in the 1955 Bosättning as well as in Larsson and Svedberg’s Heminredning from the same year.\(^\text{69}\) (Fig. 3.17)

The magazine voiced the concern of ordinary people, defending their habits and needs against architects’ visions of how to live in a modern way. In an editorial about a Baronbackarna survey, Thomas Wedel, editor-in-chief of Allt i Hemmet, asked why the modernist architects continued to fight against the deeply rooted human need for a parlor instead of acknowledging this need and planning accordingly.\(^\text{70}\) He listed all the ways in which architects had battled the idea of the parlor during the past twenty years:

\(^{68}\) Larsson and Fredriksson, “Hur Erk och Maja fick ‘storkök’ i vanlig trea,” 10-11.
\(^{69}\) Wærn Bugge and Ralf, eds., Bosättning (1955), 20; Larsson och Svedberg, Heminredning (1955), 41.
\(^{70}\) Wedel, “Ett försvar för finrummet,” 13. In the same issue, Birgit Sunesson has an article about the same
They have called the largest and nicest room the living room, they have skipped the door to the entrance hall to force the family into the large room, they have made the kitchens smaller and smaller so that people would not have space to iron, sew, eat, and be there. All such chores would take place in the living room. It did not succeed. The large, sunny living room became a parlor for the parents, who continued ironing, sewing, eating, and being in their tiny little kitchens, while every now and then they cursed the lack of space. Then the architects went even further, simplified the interior of the living room, skipped the parquet floor, put in simple cupboards, made it more or less open to the kitchen, and called it the all-room. But the new investigation proves that this was also in vain.\(^71\)

Wedel defended the parlor by focusing on the need for a space for our most precious things, “a sacred space that is always neat and tidy,” where people could relax after work or entertain unexpected guests. He did not avoid the notion of display, stating that “You may call it a need for bragging, but as long as it must be seen as a human need, one cannot deny it.”\(^72\) In conclusion, he suggested that the ideal room combination remained

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\(^72\) Ibid. Swedish text: “ett allra heligaste so mmedern öppet på utrymme. Då gick arkitekterna ännu längre, förenklade vardagsrummets inredning, slopade parkettgolvet, satte in enkel skåpinredning, gjorde det mer eller mindre öppet mot köket och kallade det allrum. Men den nya utredningen visar att även detta var förväntades.”
one advocated by *Allt i Hemmet*, namely a large kitchen with room for many activities, meals, and family “togetherness,” along with a smaller parlor for the adults.\(^73\)

To further emphasize his point in favor of the parlor, he illustrated the editorial with two images—one according to how the architects had imagined the all-room in Baronbackarna, the other a more realistic picture of what such a space looked like when people had moved in. (See fig. 3.14) Resembling the family room of Erk and Maja, the architects’ version focuses on multipurpose use and vernacular features. In contrast, the image representing the lived reality in a particular all-room in Baronbackarna focuses on relaxation and socialization. The table is not intended for eating or work, serving rather as a coffee table with a shiny surface. The chairs are comfortable, upholstered easy chairs, rather than the vernacular type stick-back furniture shown in the architects’ version. The wall is covered with a storage and shelving system filled with books, including a cabinet that probably contains a radio and record player. There is no obvious surface intended for work or meals, and there is no sewing machine on display. This version combines to represent a parlor of the kind that *God bostad* described—an evening room for the adults, not a living room used for all kinds of activities.

*Allt i Hemmet* addressed more than the needs of children: it promoted the adults’ need for their own space in the home—a parlor—along with the ideal of a living room for all the family’s activities. In this way, the magazine defended the view of ordinary people and confirmed *God bostad*’s observation that the living room served as an evening room for the adults.

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Already in the first issue after Fredriksson took over as an editor in 1956, *Allt i Hemmet* immediately provoked modernist architects and designers with an article that ran with the headline “Mother needs the parlor,” advocating the same message as Thomas Wedel regarding Baronbackarna a couple of years later.\(^{74}\) “Too many do not use the little modern apartment as the architects have pictured it,” Fredriksson argued, “and they scold the people. Why not try to plan the dwelling according to the real habits of people—and their bad habits?” (Fig. 3.18) The article is illustrated with a cartoon in which an architect, rolled blueprint in hand, firmly drives an unhappy husband (with his newspaper and pipe), his children, and the family dog out of the kitchen into the new-style living room: “Into the living room, says the architect,” reads the caption. The chaotic brood are sent to a room where abstract art decorates the walls, a delicate sculpture stands on a pedestal, and a rose stands alone in a slim vase. The message of this humorous drawing is that the husband and children, to say nothing of the dog, do not fit in the fine environment, with their sandwiches, milk glasses, football, and toys. The mother dries dishes in the adjacent kitchen area, looking worried.

The research behind the article was once again architect Lennart Holm’s investigation of living habits, which argued that the living room is not really a living room. In 1955, Holm defended his dissertation based on five field studies of life in modern Swedish apartments.\(^{75}\) Among other things, he found that men spent half their leisure time in the kitchen of the apartment, not in the living room.


\(^{75}\) Lennart Holm, *Familj och bostad: En redovisning av fem fältstudier i moderna svenska familjebostäder*
For her *Allt i Hemmet* article, Fredriksson interviewed a Mrs. Bergman, a living example in favor of the parlor, who agrees with the author in disdaining the architects’ vision and agreeing that the typical one-bedroom apartment, built by the tens of thousands around Sweden, did not suit the families who lived there. “Change the people, the experts reply,” Fredriksson states rhetorically, explaining that it is “indeed what they mean, when they let Mrs. Bergman in the one-bedroom apartment know that she is stuck-up—sometimes even hostile to children—because she uses the living room as a parlor, the other room as a bedroom for children and adults, and keeps the children’s toys in a kitchen cabinet.”

The key, according to Fredriksson’s thesis, is the basic need for a peaceful space for the adults and the things they care for—many that they have acquired with great sacrifice, such as the fine sofa, the beautiful vase, or the books. Mrs. Bergman’s argument followed Maja’s in the made-up story that small children prefer to play where the mother is, and she is mostly in the kitchen; at night, they want to sleep in their mother’s bed. Mrs. Bergman concludes: “It is often boring to be a child-bound housewife. To have a nice, tidy room—not to brag about but to be proud of—is the means for me and my thousands of sisters to fend off boredom.”

The statement “not to brag about but to be proud of” resembles the findings of design historian Judy Attfield when interviewing women who had moved to the new

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town of Harlow outside London in the early 1950s. It was a time when people bought home furnishings for a lifetime and women took pride in their work to maintain the home with a sense of pleasure. Although associated with display, the space was also connected with work, according to Attfield’s interviews. The women in Harlow most valued the practical aspects of the house and, like Mrs. Bergman, they saw the parlor as a private space, more than as a space for show. In this way, Attfield challenges the anthropologist Erving Goffman’s differentiation between an actor’s front- and backstage behavior—for an audience or not—as a metaphor for the house. The frontstage would be the entrance and spaces for living and dining with their display to an “audience,” in contrast to the less formal backstage with private and service areas, where the individual can seek refuge. As Attfield points out, this view is the male point of view, as the house was the women’s place of work and their view was from the inside.

From the women’s perspective, the Harlow house in the 1950s was not a statement of status—“not [something] to brag about,” as Mrs. Bergman says. Rather, the parlor had another function than to emulate the middle class: here, family relationships are spatialized. Taken in parallel with the 1937 investigation of 214 families in Stockholm, Brita Åkerman concluded that the circumstances observed in Harlow were similar to those in Sweden. Åkerman found that, while planning for the family with a spacious kitchen and a separate space for the children to sleep, the parents need their own space

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79 Ibid., 220. See also Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
where they can be alone with their comfortable chairs, reading lamp, and the radio, and where guests may sit.  

TV host Ria Wägner supported the idea of a space for the adults, adding to *Allt i Hemmet’s* promotion of the parlor. While longing for the large family kitchen, Wägner defended the parlor, which she regarded as far from the “dead and cold room on parade” some people made it out to be. She saw the new parlor as adjusted to our time. Using the same argument as Wedel in the Baronbackarna editorial and Fredriksson with Mrs. Bergman as an example, she saw it more as a “reservation” with room for the objects, including pictures, furniture, and ornaments that one wants to admire and to protect from small children. Indeed, she described the parlor as a “forbidden territory for the smallest children.” She asked, “Why do we always only talk about the children’s need for their own space?” adding that “I think the adults have the right for a play corner, too, where they can keep their treasures” out of reach of children.

But what to do with existing spaces? Wägner argued that it did not have to be a whole parlor, it might be just a corner. For Mrs. Bergman and the other women living with their husbands and children in small one-bedroom apartments, a space of their own was still a need in the 1950s. Television, however, would change the use of the living room.

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82 Wägner, “Får vi sitta i köket?,” 78. Swedish text: “Finrummet ska inte vara ett dött och kallt rum som står på parad.”
83 Ibid. Swedish text: “Ett reservat som är förbjuden mark för de allra minsta . . . Varför talas det alltid bara om att barn behöver ha en egen vrå? Jag tycker de vuxna har rätt till en lekvrå också, där de kan förvara sina skatter oskyddade.”
The Arrival of Television

Few things have changed our habits and way of furnishing the living room as much as the arrival of television. When it arrived in the mid-1950s, television paved the way for flexible, easily rearranged furnishings in line with modern ideals and presented another opportunity to teach people how to furnish their homes.

Since the 1920s, the radio had been the central piece of entertainment furniture in the home. Radio encouraged a new orientation of the living space around the device, with comfortable seating, often in the living room, where radio parties and family togetherness could be enjoyed. A common living room arrangement in the 1940s included a sofa and coffee table (adjusted to the height of the sofa), with a couple of comfortable armchairs on either side.84

The new medium of television required a new type of furniture and a special place for viewing. The first television programs in Sweden aired in 1956. Broadcasters projected that some hundred thousand licenses would be purchased by the 1960s. This prediction did not account for the appeal of the new technology: by the end of the 1950s, almost a million households in Sweden had television.85

Publishers and producers quickly addressed the need for educating the public on home design for television. Allt i Hemmet provided consumer guidance for “20 questions regarding the purchase of TV,” with experts on technology, cost, the distribution of service in such a large yet sparsely populated country as Sweden, in addition to

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84 Larsson, Värje människa är ett skåp, 185.
85 Dag Nordmark, Finnrummet och lekstugan: Kultur- och underhållningsprogram i svensk radio och TV (Stockholm: Prisma, 2000), 184. In 1967, 2.2 million households paid for a television license. Licensing for broadcast service, which also supported the national public radio system, existed until 2018. Since television programming was being consumed through devices other than television, parliament replaced the license fee with a general tax to support national public radio and television.
programming. In contrast with radio, the television required both comfortable seating and clear line of sight to the device, which in practice meant light and easily moveable furniture for sitting as well as something on which to place the television set.

At the H55 exhibition, interior designers presented “good TV furnishings” with moveable sections of chairs that could easily be combined into a sofa, a type that Ikea had been promoting since 1954 under the name Gazell, which featured loose cushions and spindly legs. In combination with Gazell (and without mentioning television), Ikea promoted the table Tele “for the person who says yes to the new,” a mountable square table only 50 cm high that could be placed in the corner singly or in pairs in front of a seating group. “It is a pleasure for us to be the first to offer this fresh idea,” the catalog announced, reinforcing the sense that Ikea employed “modern designers.” With the arrival of television, the tables became lower and lower, providing a better view despite the presence of TV sandwiches, TV thermoses, and other things that made it convenient to drink coffee and eat in front of the television. In 1958, Ikea presented its first TV set in the catalog, placed on the table Tele, now introduced as “model TELE—for the new TV set.”

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86 Marianne Fredriksson, “20 frågor inför TV-köpet,” Allt i Hemmet 3, no. 9 (1958): 14-17, 83, 87. For the 1958-1959, year the Swedish parliament decided that the Swedish television would send twelve hours a week along with some special programs and movies, which would increase by a couple of hours per year.

87 Maria Perers, Leif Wallin, and Anna Womack, Vardagsrummet: En plats för allt och alla (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2013), 108-09; Ikéa, Katalog 1954, 20; and following catalogs, such as (1955), 19; (1956), 7, 80. Swedish text: “god tv-möblering.”


89 Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog 58 (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 88. Swedish text: “modell TELE – för den nya TV-apparaten.” In the 1957 catalog, Ikea mentioned TV for the first time, such as a “model TV, the record player cabinet on which you can place the television set,” indicating that not yet everyone could afford a television or that the technology had not yet reached everyone in the country; “The new television set that you dream of or already have fits on top of the cabinet.” Swedish text: “modell TV Grammofonskåpet som
Ikea, Bra bohag, and Allt i Hemmet all agreed that “TV created new furnishing problems,” and each showed similar solutions for easily moveable upholstered stools and chairs, with or without armrests, and low tables. Stationary pieces in their room designs included the sofa and a TV set placed on a low table, perhaps combined with a record player or on a pedestal by the bookshelf.\(^9\) (Figs. 3.19-20) While children preferred to sit on the floor, as Bra bohag pointed out, low stools introduced casual sitting close to the floor, such as Ikea’s upholstered stools (called TV). In its promotion of do-it-yourself culture, Allt i Hemmet showed how to make stools with old back cushions taken from the

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\^9\) Möbel-Ikéa, *Inredningskatalog 1957*, 91. The Co-op did not feature TV sets in the interiors of their 1957 furniture brochure, but in 1959 they published a little folder with benches and tables suitable for the TV, telephone, plants, as well as coffee tables. KF, *Convexi KF Möbler* (Stockholm: KF Möbler, 1959). In the same year, the Co-op published a 24-page brochure promoting the cooperative idea with a story on the daily life of the Eriksson family living in a suburb of Stockholm. They are featured sitting on the floor in front of the TV, which is placed in the corner on a table, and a dialogue indicates that the husband has just made the final payment on the TV, purchased on easy terms from the Co-op. Incidentally, the Erikssons are shown watching a consumer guidance expert from the Co-op in discussion with homemakers. Konsum, *Familjen väljer* (Stockholm: Annonser-Svea, 1959), 17-19. Svea was the advertising agency of the Labor and Co-Operative movements. In 1960, *Allt i Hemmet* featured articles about how TV technology had reached further north in Sweden, with headings such as “Now the Sami watch TV,” making a point of how even in remote places where the indigenous Sami people live it is now possible to have a TV. The magazine further indicates that five million Swedes can watch TV in 1960, with a projection of seven million by 1962; the article states that one third of the households have a TV in 1960. When the network is fully developed, every second household would have television, which would make Sweden number four in television ownership in the world per capita. Most TV owners belong to social group II (middle class), followed by social group III (working class), whereas “group I show a certain firmness against the TV set as a property.” Swedish text: “medan grupp I visar en viss ständaktighet mot TV:n som ägodel.” Gösta Grönlund, “Mitt i tittåldern...,” *Allt i Hemmet* 5, no. 9 (1960): 13; Birgit Sunesson, “Nu ser samen på TV,” *Allt i Hemmet* 5, no. 9 (1960): 14-16.
attic, some teak-veneered wood from the lumberyard, and ready-made legs. On their side, producers of TV sets advertised the television as a piece of furniture itself, standing on legs and enclosed in mahogany or teak, with or without doors so as to hide the technology when not in use. At the same time, simpler upholstery through foam rubber or foam plastic increased the number of comfortable, inexpensive chairs and sofas on the market to meet the need for light and moveable furniture.

After decades of promotion by architects and organizations to use the living room and get rid of clumsy furniture suites, Fredriksson noted with pleasure that “the TV is in the midst of changing the taste and habits that educators fought for in vain for so long. The heavy sofa suites are quickly disappearing in the U.S.A, people acquire simple, light chairs and stools and handy sofas—often combined of sections of chairs.”

The living room now served a new function with the arrival of television. Housing investigations in the early 1960s confirmed that the living room was the place for the TV set, which made the living room the place for family togetherness in the evening. In contrast with 1956, more leisure activities, such as embroidery, had moved to the living room thanks to the television, and two-thirds of households moved to the living room to watch TV.

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92 “Bjud på TV-trivsel Körting” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 2, no. 9 (1957); “Se PHILIPS TV i Ert hem” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 3, no. 11 (1958): 5. Philips also promoted their TV catalog in which they give “ten inspiring proposals for TV furnishings and a good explanation of technical specifications.”
93 For example, in discussing quality and price in its introductory pages, for the first time the 1958 Ikeas catalog specifically highlights that they use new materials—foam plastic and foam rubber—in several of the new models. They also reveal that they have ameliorated several of the older models with these materials. Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog-58, 6.
94 Marianne Fredriksson, “TV ger oss ny möblering,” Allt i Hemmet 2, no. 9 (1957): 13. Swedish text: “Men TV kräver lätta flyttbara sittmöbler och TV håller som bäst på att åstadkomma den förändring av smak och vanor som upplysningen så länge kämpat förgäves för. De tunga soffgarnityren försvinner snabbt i USA, folk skaffar enkla, lätta stolar och pallar och behändigsoffor – ofta sammansatta av sektionsfåtöljer.”
drink coffee after their daily meal in the kitchen. People who did not yet have their own television visited friends and neighbors to watch and, on an ordinary evening in 1959, a fifth of those without TV spent their time in somebody else’s living room where there was one.

Such changes in behavior could cause problems. A woman contacted *Allt i Hemmet* to complain that she was fed up with waiting on neighboring families who stopped by to watch TV, expecting TV sandwiches and TV tea. The magazine, with their usual interest in casual entertainment and living, reassured the reader that she could watch and relax without entertaining others, promising that, sooner or later, most homes would have their own TVs. Fredriksson was right. In 1957, she advised that “in the end we will sit there together in front of the screen in the living room anyway. Because there is no doubt that television has come to stay, that it will draw us into our homes, conquer our everyday, change our habits and influence our furnishings.”

Others refined their practice of watching TV. Larsson had tested “the rules” she taught in *Allt i Hemmet*: the room should not be dark as a cinema, the TV should not be placed opposite a window or along the window wall (so as to avoid reflections on the screen), the distance from the television should be far enough that one’s clenched hand on a straight arm will cover the screen, and there should be nothing between the seating

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95 Ingrid Dalén and Lennart Holm, *Bättre bostäder* (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Prisma, 1965), 143-44. The investigations referred to were people living in apartments in Baronbackarna, Örebro, 1956 and 1962, and in Stockholm 1963.
furniture and the TV.\textsuperscript{99} (Fig. 3.21) Bra bohag used scientific arguments to declare that “each homemaker (and housefather) should have a recliner for complete rest after a hard day’s work. . . . one that the doctors recommend because it facilitates blood circulation and relieves the heart, which makes watching TV much more rewarding.”\textsuperscript{100}

Television was special when it arrived, yet \textit{Allt i Hemmet} warned: “Do not give the TV set the place of honor in the room, do not place it as a house altar in a corner. Being shiny and a bit ostentatious, it is possible to turn it into something more remarkable than it is.”\textsuperscript{101} The following year, the magazine strengthened the message that the TV set should not change the everyday use of a room, and suggested that the TV could be placed on a rolling table so as to adapt to existing furnishings.\textsuperscript{102} Ikea also advised flexibility in television furniture and promoted \textit{Parkett} in 1959 as an easily moved chair made of foam rubber, with black legs of tubular steel: “If you do not want to have TV furniture in plain sight during the day, just move \textit{Parkett} in a single, 5-minute operation before 8 pm and then you can sink into a chair like in a movie theater.”\textsuperscript{103} However, \textit{Parkett} actually looked like a TV, with both the seat and back in the form of a screen.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 12-17; Wedel and Larsson, “Det här med TV ska vi ta naturligt,” 17.
\textsuperscript{102} Wedel and Larsson, “Det här med TV ska vi ta naturligt,” 17. The rolling table was briefly mentioned as a good solution in the article “TV ger oss ny möblering” in 1957, but with the conclusion that it was hard to find a sturdy table on wheels, 16.
Television also required special consideration for other furniture in the living room. Larsson suggested setting up Akari lamps made of Japanese paper, which spread a mild light along with the TV and, typical for the time, a stable ashtray standing on the floor next to a comfortable easy chair with wooden armrests and matching footstool. She noticed that American interiors often had the TV set and radio included in a wall of shelves, which she thought might be the best solution, though Swedish bookshelves were not yet deep enough for use in this way. Larsson was so influential in Sweden, that it took only a couple of years before such shelving systems appeared in the Ikea and the Bra bohag catalogs.

In 1959, Ikea introduced “Vivel—for the practical background wall of the all-room,” acknowledging that the consumer “had probably seen in different magazines and courses that the modern interior designer seeks to concentrate storage on a single wall.” (Fig. 3.22) Ikea advised that, for a wall arrangement with shelves, writing-surface, and cupboards, “please place the TV in the center.” While Allt i Hemmet and the furniture catalogs promoted chairs that could be moved easily—or even a moveable TV—there was still a sofa in every living room depicted in its pages. In addition, as shelving systems came to accommodate the TV set, Ikea set the tone for the 1960s furnishing ideal by further teaching how to furnish “For pleasant TV evenings”:

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105 Bra bohag, Bra bohag 1959-60, 21; Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog 1959, 90.
Let us congratulate you on the privilege of setting up home today. Not only because there is so much to choose from, but also because from the beginning you’ve taken the TV set into consideration. You place the base sofa so that one can conveniently follow a TV program. Include some light and ergonomic easy chairs. Frame the TV set with a shelving arrangement on which you like to rest your eyes. A couple of small tables that service the different seats are practical and nice.\textsuperscript{107}

The TV may not have become a house altar in the corner, as \textit{Allt i Hemmet} feared, but it came to play something close to that role, placed as it was in the center of a shelving system; we will see this develop further in the 1960s.

\textbf{Making the Living Room a Place for the Evening}

Even though the 1960 \textit{God bostad} still stated that the living room “shall be the central gathering place of the family,” it had deleted the 1954 sentence that an “all-round use” was desirable, ascertaining that the living room is mainly used in the evenings.\textsuperscript{108}

Rather than promoting a modernist ideal of a living room for the family’s daily activities and children’s play, the housing board adjusted the building norms to reflect how people lived. From its investigations, the board had learned that most family apartments had both


a seating group and a dining set.\textsuperscript{109} In addition to offering space for television, therefore, the 1960 God bostad argued that there should be \textit{two} different eating places in a family apartment: “one for daily meals in or next to the kitchen, and one for Sunday dinners and for occasions when the family has guests.”\textsuperscript{110} The housing board thereby confirmed a more traditional or formal use of the living room, for which Ikea and Bra bohag readily provided dining sets and seating groups. In this way, the living room could provide a private space for adults, like a parlor, and still serve as an evening room for watching TV. But it was far from the sewing and woodcraft projects of the child-friendly family room once promoted in \textit{Allt i Hemmet} and the official setting-up-home brochure \textit{Bosättning}.


Chapter Four

Practical Furnishings toward Simplified Entertaining

In the 1950s, the official advice was based on meeting utilitarian conditions, which were in line with the government’s overall aim of rational consumption. The authors of *Bosättning* had little understanding of symbolic values in their straightforward message of practicality: “Do not show off with a parade of expensive things. You can do without an expensive ceiling light, a gold-plated clock or a radio gramophone. Better to save for a vacuum cleaner, a sewing machine or a washing machine.”[1] Regarding ornament, the functionalist message of the time was equally clear. “Good taste” in decoration was tied to simplicity, rather than ostentatiousness: “The home does not need many ornaments. Well-designed articles for everyday use are the best adornments: the breadbasket and fruit bowl, the flower vase, the gratin dish, the rag rug, and the tablecloth are all examples of ornaments to the extent that they are chosen with taste and care.”[2] This chapter demonstrates how the rules conveyed in the official setting-up-home brochure, by the Co-op, and in *Allt i Hemmet* promoted a restrained view in the choice of household goods. Highlighting utility and multipurpose use for both the everyday and holiday or special occasions, the ideal these organizations presented was ascetic rather than hedonistic consumption. In contrast, Ikea challenged the official taste; by the late 1950s, however,

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the company had strengthened its advisory mission and become more like the other actors in promoting modern home furnishings. At the same time, Marianne Fredriksson and Lena Larsson of Allt i Hemmet acknowledged a need to express a taste other than official notions of practicality, recognizing that objects possess multiple meanings.

The Path to Rational Consumption

The official advice of Bosättning reflected the Swedish middle way between Liberalism and Marxism, where the “reasonable consumer” replaced the proletariat in general as the dominant subject. In this vision, rather than employing conspicuous consumption to enhance personal status, citizens would be directed toward commodities representative of the common good as part of a new collectivist society, as Helena Mattsson argues. The setting-up-home brochure contributed to the ideal of reasonable consumption, aiming at creating a middle class, with consumer education increasingly supportive of this goal in the 1950s and 1960s. As Peder Aléx has shown, the pursuit of rational (or “correct”) consumption has enjoyed a long tradition in Sweden since the foundation of the cooperative movement in the late nineteenth century.

Fostering rational consumption, the Co-op exemplified this modern, practical approach, even in comparison with official advice. Vårt hem included drawings of a traditional stick-back chair as a cheap alternative to a chair with padded seat, but this was featured alongside the new, avant-garde Ant chair by Arne Jacobsen as well as a Thonet-
type bentwood chair. (Fig. 4.1) The accompanying descriptions, however, did not discuss modernity, style, or designer names, which today would be invoked to sell. Rather, the book provided facts related to consumer education; the Jacobsen plywood chair, for example, could be damaged if struck, and the bentwood chairs, while not cheap, were well built and strong.5

While promoting space-saving and multipurpose features, the Co-op featured a folding table serving both as a work surface along the wall and as a “festive dining table for those times when not eating in the kitchen.”6 (Fig. 4.2) Eating in the kitchen was presented as the normal thing to do, according to the Co-op, a message reinforced by the fact that reconfiguring the table for dining required some effort.7 As we will see, more informal ways of entertaining were in the offing. Above all, the Co-op followed a modernist approach in presenting furniture with clean lines, and without surface ornamentation; furniture suites or historical references were absent.8

5 Henrikson, Vårt hem, 37. To develop the Nordic cooperative collaboration, the Swedish Co-op, KF, signed an agreement with the Danish Co-op FDB to trade tables from KF’s factory in Lammhult with chairs produced in Denmark. The brochures depict stick-back chairs with or without armrests as well as a rocking chair. Konsum-Kooperativa, Möbler 1955 (Stockholm: Konsum-Kooperativa, 1955); Co-op möbler, Matbord och stolar (Stockholm: KF möbler, 1956), folded A4-brochure.

6 Henrikson, Vårt hem, 34-35. Swedish text: “Är bordet fritt från fastsittande hurtsar och hindrande slårar, så kan det också användas som festligt matbord de gånger man inte äter i köket.” There was a separate pedestal with drawers, which could be moved when the table was used for eating.

7 Vernacular or eighteenth-century furniture is missing from Sune Fromell’s depictions, and even the folding table is designed with a desk in mind rather than as a traditional, gate-legged table based on eighteenth-century designs, such as Ikea’s and the one featured in the setting-up-home brochure for work and dining. Ikea katalog 1955, 70; Wärm Bugge and Ralf, eds., Bosättning (1955), 31.

Women’s Spaces and Meaning-Making

In contrast to the Co-op’s presentation, *Allt i Hemmet* challenged the official taste for modernity and defended the parlor by foregrounding the psychological needs of the consumer for objects rich in meaning. In an editorial, Fredriksson defended the housewife who spends much of her time vacuum-cleaning and tidying the parlor with its gold-plated wall-clock, velvet easy chairs, and dust-free, shiny surfaces. She observed that radio programs and newspapers often criticize such housewives for having bad taste and bad living habits, and for constantly telling their children “do not touch” and “be careful of” in their dollhouse-like homes.

Design historian Judy Attfield confirms that much of contemporary literature on housing dismissed the parlor, neglecting women’s need for a space and their pride in shiny surfaces. The women in Harlow were not expected to work, but rather perform their female identity through the display of leisure. But they saw the home as their workplace and made their work conspicuous: “There is no product in housework: it only ‘shows’ when it is not done. The signs which announce its efficient completion are more to do with excessiveness—high gloss and shine, brilliant whiteness, nonfunctional furnishing and collections of ornaments.” The women thus created their own meaning in the upkeep of the parlor and its objects.

Meaning-making in the Swedish parlor involved gold-plated clocks as well as armchairs of laminated bentwood, two symbolic extremes representing different types of taste at the time. In her editorial, Fredriksson told the story of how a woman invited her

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for coffee in the one-bedroom apartment. She showed Fredriksson a photograph from her childhood, with her parents and seven siblings in front of their simple, one-room cottage in Småland. Although modest, it was always kept clean, reflecting the paramount dread of hopelessness, degeneration, and vermin. She too likes to keep the dirt away, and Fredriksson reflected that the shiny wall-clock became a symbol of how the woman’s life has improved.\footnote{Fredriksson, “Vårt behov av finhet,” 13.} Fredriksson contrasted this example with that of another woman who was familiar with modern design; for example, she knew the difference between Bruno Mathsson’s and Yngve Ekström’s laminated bentwood chairs, and therefore her taste was quite different from that of the first housewife. Laminated bentwood chairs had suited the official taste of invention and elegance in domestic manufacture since the 1930s and were featured in numerous home exhibitions starting in that period. The children, however, were not particularly welcome in her living room. Despite making reference to taste, Fredriksson stated that she did not want to use the two women as examples of “good” and “bad” taste, for both women had bought what they thought were fine things. She also did not want to judge them for making life at home more complicated for their small children. Instead, she wanted to defend them, observing that most people have their own motives for choosing certain objects.

In conclusion, Fredriksson argued that most people have to adjust between two extremes: the need to make the home practical for the family and the need to have objects that reinforce their self-esteem. In recognizing emotional values as they relate to material
things and consumption, Fredriksson was early in the Swedish discussion. In the small home, practical and the emotional needs always collided, Fredriksson concluded, because sensible living in a one-bedroom apartment with small children requires that almost everything be practical. And that, in her opinion, was “an unreasonable demand.”

Underlying these statements are key issues in terms of housing, namely the lack of space and the distribution of space within apartments. What Fredriksson points out is that there are both practical and psychological needs at play in a home.

As a final strike against the arbiters of taste who had looked down on women’s taste for nearly a century, Fredriksson and Larsson stated in 1957: “Our living rooms are solid and objective, and must be so. How nice then for a woman to potter about in her modern home somewhere and make it as sweet—and perhaps slightly impractical—as she likes.” They thereby acknowledged a need to consider meaning in objects as a way of

12 See also Orsi Husz, “Den rätta känslan för tingen. Debatten om köp-slit-och-släng i Sverige 1960-61 i en historisk kontext,” in Mode - en introduktion, ed. Dirk Gindt and Louise Wallenberg (Stockholm: Raster, 2009), 70. She refers to an editorial written by Marianne Fredriksson for Allt i Hemmet after a famous debate in Sweden in 1960–1961 between Lena Larsson and Willy Maria Lundberg on köp-slit-och-släng—buy, wear, tear, and throw away. Husz sees this debate as a turning point in acknowledging an emotional value for objects and consumption, ibid., 48. Larsson, Varje människa är ett skäp, 110, quoting an article in Form 1953. Cilla Robach also discusses the social function of things and how Gregor Paulsson, who wrote Vackrare vardagsvara in 1919, realized in Tingens bruk och prägel (1956) that the functionalist movement exaggerated the practical and aesthetic without realizing the social meaning of things for people; the purpose remained to foster “right consumption.” Robach also discusses Lena Larsson’s argument in Bodag (1957) for the freedom that consumption gives in comparison to the moral tones of the consumer guidance movement in which she herself had been active in the 1940s and 1950s. Robach, however, points out that Larsson did not argue for free consumption, focusing instead on objective consumer guidance to cultivate consumption in a desirable direction; complete furniture suites were still not approved or seen as an independent choice by the consumer, according to Larsson. In the wear, tear, and throw away debate, Larsson pointed out the freedom coming with disposable articles such as diapers, revealing different kinds of quality that can be seen in comparing practical walking shoes with those worn on festive occasions; Larsson indicated that the consumer would know the difference. Robach, “Den goda smaken,” 326-27; Formens frigörelse, 196-210.

13 Marianne Fredriksson, interior Lena Larsson, “Pappa sover i mammas rum,” Allt i Hemmet 2, no. 9 (1957): 37. See also for example Penny Sparke, As Long as It’s Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste (London and San Francisco: Pandora, Harper Collins Publishers, 1995) and Penny Sparke, “Those extravagant
forming and expressing an identity, in opposition to the official taste manual *Bosättning*, which did not leave room for personal attachments to objects.\textsuperscript{15} Instead, they focused on the woman’s needs for a parlor-like interior, observing that “the stay-at-home-mother more strongly feels the need for a Sunday corner in the midst of the gray everyday between the sink and stove, where everything is the same as usual.”\textsuperscript{16} (Fig. 4.3)

Larsson and Fredriksson also made a point in the article of acknowledging “the woman’s need to decorate” and added potted plants, personal keepsakes, and flowery pillows and tablecloths embroidered with cross-stitching. In doing so, they recognized that they were going against the officially mandated good taste, noting “only a shallow aesthetic (shallow, as one can only see it superficially) could call all her embroideries a waste of women’s work.”\textsuperscript{17}

**Ikea Challenges the Official Taste**

In contrast to the Co-op and the “official” advice on modern living conveyed in *Bosättning* and *Heminredning*, Ikea acknowledged different types of taste and targeted a broad clientele, selling traditional as well as modern pieces of furniture. The first Ikea catalog included chandeliers and gold-plated, carved wall-clocks presented as

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\textsuperscript{15} Wærn Bugge and Ralf, eds., *Bosättning* (1955), 45.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 37. Swedish text: “Kvinnans behov att pynta är stort . . . och bara den ytligaste esteten (ytlig därför att han ser till sak och inte till orsak) har hjärtan att kalla alla broderierna slöseri med kvinnokraft.”
“distinguished treasures for joy and use.” In addition, there were two spreads of oil paintings depicting stormy oceans and landscapes in line with popular taste, rather than the graphic prints, considered affordable “good” art, promoted in publications such as *Bosättning* and the Bra bohag catalogs. In the 1955 catalog, Ikea clearly offered: “The most pleasant and functional in modern design as well as the best in the more conventional style.” This meant a range from new Danish-inspired seating groups to a new “exclusive Chippendale group” and a Rococo revival set presented as “beautiful and well-made furniture for the ‘parlor’.” (Figs. 4.4-5)

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18 Ikéa, *Katalog 1951*, 46-47, 52-57, and back cover (68). There were also household goods such as stainless steel cutlery, cooking utensils, and irons, but the following year there were no such items or paintings in the Ikea catalog, only furniture and lamps. Household goods were more in line with Ikea’s original products, which could be found in previous sales brochures, including ballpoint pens, shaving equipment, wallets, and bags as well as cut glass chandeliers and cutlery. Wärn Bugge and Ralf, eds., *Bosättning* (1955), 45. The Co-op’s *Vårt hem* did not write more about ornaments than in the section on colors and patterns that such things, including books and flowers, bring color to a room and give freedom for variation. The tone was therefore different, and more open, than in *Bosättning*. Henrikson, *Vårt hem*, 50-51. Bra bohag collaborated with Folkrörelsernas Konstfrämjande, the People’s Movements for Art Promotion in Stockholm, an organization founded in 1947 with the aim to promote affordable art such as graphic prints.

19 Ikéa, *Katalog 1955*, 3, 7. Swedish text: “Det mest trivsamma och funktionella i modern formgivning liksom det bästa i den mera konventionella stilen har vi försökt samla i den inredningskatalog som Ni nu håller i handen.” The back page also stated that Ikea offered both modern design and the more conventional style. The 1955 catalog was larger—132 pages in comparison to 100 in 1954—and, for the first time, it included a table of contents starting with 23 pages of sofas and upholstered chairs, followed by two pages of upholstered so-called stilmöbler, furniture in historical styles, and then 10 pages of sofa beds; in total, there were 24 pages of different types of beds, mattresses, and bedroom suites, followed by 15 pages of dining room furniture, and then sections on tables, radio cabinets, desks, shelves, dressers, kitchen furniture, lamps, etc. In the 1955 catalog, Ikea wrote for the first time about the importance of quality, especially since an increasing number of their sales were based on personal recommendations, and that they used no inferior materials such as a saddle girth of paper, wooden upholstery, or other inferior materials. They mentioned the “new sensational upholstery material, ådelfiber, from cocoanut,” but no foam rubber or foam plastic. Another novelty in the 1955 catalog was the use of a slogan on the cover, “Önskehem till önskepris” (A home to wish for at a price to wish for), which in a few versions was used on the covers until 1961. In the 1954 catalog, Ikea started using quotes from happy customers around Sweden and reports from their temporary exhibitions at fairs in Stockholm, S:t Eriksmässan; Östersund, Expo Norr; and Malmö, Öresundsmässan. Celebrating ten years in operation, Ikea had also opened a permanent exhibition hall in Älmhult in 1953. Ikéa, *Katalog 1954*, 1-3. These exhibitions complemented the catalog, which otherwise was the way for Ikea to reach customers.

20 Ikéa, *Katalog 1955*, 11, 15, 16, 31, 32. The Danish-inspired seating groups were presented with headlines such as “In modern Danish style” and “for the person who appreciates modern design.” Swedish text: “I
Promoting “fine goods to the lowest price,” Ikea also provided the service of an interior designer. Customers were asked to answer 20 questions so that the interior designer could get to know their taste as much as possible. (Fig. 4.6) They would also make a drawing of their apartment and write down some ideas on how they pictured the interior, what kind of furniture, carpets, and lamps were their preference, and so on. As design historian Kerstin Wickman argues, Ikea sought to establish personal relationships with the customers by using the same methods as the SSF and the municipal setting-up-home consultants.

“We are not here to judge. One type of taste is as good as another,” Ikea declared. Accordingly, the first three questions determined whether you “appreciate the extremely modern interior,” “prefer the more moderate style,” or “have a

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21 Ikéa, Katalog 1955, 3; Ikéa, Katalog 1954, 3. Swedish text: “goda varor till lägsta priser allt enligt vår mer än 10 år gamla garanti: full belätenhet eller pengarna tillbaka.” The interior design service had started discreetly the year before. For the first time in the catalog, Ikea offered in 1954 the service of an interior design expert who could make furnishing suggestions for free if customers sent information about measurements and the type of furniture they liked, but it only appeared in a small notice on page 65, next to pictures of desks; the offer received more prominent placement in the following year. Ikéa, Katalog 1954, 65.

22 Ikéa, Katalog 1955, 5. On the following page was the plan, where every square was one meter and customers were asked to draw their apartment, including every window and the direction of the doors. The expert would then send a detailed suggestion, including color schemes and fabric samples. The cost for Ikea was 40 kronor, but they would only charge 20, and nothing for orders over 1,500 kronor, meaning that in practice the service was free of charge for customers who bought their furnishings at Ikea. The questions were featured in the catalogs until 1963: (1956), 5; (1957), 5-6; (1958), 6, 124; (1959), 126; (1960), 156; (1961), 4; (1962), 172; (1963), 18.


passion for antique styles, etc.?" To explore these preferences, other questions asked if the customer “appreciate[d] ‘fine furniture’ only to be used with guests” or “do you want entirely practical furniture that you may use all the time?” The following year, Ikeå emphasized the contrast to the practical furniture: “or do you also like elegant decorative furniture suites, which you protect with transparent plastic?” Other taste-related questions determined if the consumer “appreciate[d] a cut-glass chandelier in one room,” “like shiny, polished surfaces,” and “prefer a heavier furniture suite of oak to a light of mahogany.”

*Bosättning* chose a different approach, featuring no furniture suites, cut-glass chandeliers, or heavy oak furniture. *Bosättning* rejected shiny surfaces and recommended, “a thin oil treatment allows the natural surface of the wood show to advantage,” but admitted that a mat plastic lacquer on the table was more durable. Favoring the genuine and vernacular, there were no oriental rugs (not even hand-knotted ones) depicted in *Bosättning*; rather, the publication presented mostly striped handwoven rag rugs or the sturdier ones made of wool and cow hair, the later being almost impossible to wear out. The text informed that “good machine-woven rugs are now available in different qualities, monochrome or in quiet patterns,” and “rag rugs of

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harmonized colors you can weave yourself.” These simple questions and statements reveal the differences between the official advice representing “good taste” and the more inclusive attitude of IKEA.

The setting-up-home brochure testifies to a preference for hand-woven textiles in this period, indicating that women were expected to provide and take pride in making. Machine-woven rugs were acceptable if the quality was satisfactory and the colors subdued. In contrast to IKEA’s decorative, plastic-covered furniture suite for use only when entertaining, Bosättning’s ideal was modernist, practical furniture—easily moved, easily cared for, and durable, using for example wooden armrests instead of upholstered ones, and durable, solid constructions, such as Larsson’s selection for the parlor of Erk and Maja. This advice echoed the advisory publications from the 1930s and 1940s. The rhetoric of Bosättning demonstrates that there was an official “good taste” still being conveyed in the 1950s in Sweden, based on a modernist reverence for functionality and honesty in materials.

While IKEA acknowledged that consumers had different tastes, the company was also aware of the official focus on quality and functionality. On the one hand, IKEA did not want to judge taste. If a housewife liked to have a fragile silk bedspread—even though it

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30 Ibid., 38. Swedish text: “Bra maskinvävda mattor finns nu i olika kvaliteter, enfärgade eller i lugna mönster. Trasmattor i välstämda färger kan man väva själv.”
31 Ibid., 21-26. In comparison, this was an ideal also shared by Allt i Hemmet, for example in the group seating in the parlor of Erk and Maja, where the yellow upholstered sofa with legs and sides in dark wood, similar to the sofa table, could be the same type as in a drawing of such furnishings seen in Bosättning. Likewise, the green upholstered chair with wooden armrests was not dissimilar to the little easy chair depicted in Bosättning as flexible and durable.
requires more work to handle and care for it—the 1955 catalog stated: “It would be wrong to try to make her give up her bedspread for something that she does not like.”

On the other hand, the catalog acknowledged the efforts of the SSF and others: “The only thing that needs to be observed in such cases is that, in the long run, the practical and pleasant often go hand in hand and that it therefore is a good advice to put great emphasis on the practical.” Ikea concluded with, “our wholehearted appreciation for the great work that different organizations do to refine the common taste.”

Ikea's Advice Changes

Having abandoned elitism as a sales approach along with the Chippendale and Aristocrat furniture suites, Ikea moved in a more modernist direction. The 1957 catalog promoted furniture models with “new possibilities for individual and practical interiors.”

The forthright modernist position of Ikea was also clear: “Our style is pronouncedly modern, created for contemporary homes and modern people.” Unlike the previous two catalogs, the 1957 introduction did not say a word about also providing conventional styles to please all consumers. Looking through the catalog, however, Ikea still offered a striking mixture of styles—from the “ultramodern” red and black sofa and easy chair

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33 Ikéa, Katalog 1955, 5. Swedish text: “Det är felaktigt att försöka få henne att avstå från sitt överkast för något som hon inte tycker om.” The story is based on Kamprad’s own experience when he tried to convince a customer to buy a practical, easy-to-handle cotton bedspread, but the customer had insisted that she wanted the one in silk and that she really was going to take care of it. Atle Bjarnestam, Ikea – design och identitet, 22.

34 Ikéa, Katalog 1955, 5. Swedish text: “Det enda som bör påpekas i sådana fall är att det praktiska och det trivsamma ofta i det långa loppet går hand i hand och att det därför är ett gott råd att ta stor hänsyn till det praktiska. För övrigt vår helhjärtade uppskattning för det storartade arbete som nedlägges av olika organisationer på att förädla den allmänna smaken.”

Grace, with seats of foam plastic, to the Gustavian dining set Desirée.36 Ikea’s titles often had glamorous references to America, Italy, or the upper class; the models mentioned here allude to the American actress Grace Kelly, who had married Prince Rainier III of Monaco in 1956, and Frenchwoman Désirée Clary, who had married Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, the future king of Sweden, in 1798. While the 1957 catalog featured a sofa and eating and nesting tables with rectilinear lines similar to those in Allt i Hemmet’s competition of the family kitchen, it also presented a “luxurious pillar table,” Lyxita, and tables in Rococo and Renaissance revival.37 That mixture does not exist in Allt i Hemmet, Bosättning, or Bra bohag, and tells something about Ikea’s commercial endeavor to satisfy different target groups. At the same time, Ikea was moving to embrace the influential Danish Modern design and new materials. For the first time, they presented “the best of Danish art of furniture,” made in Denmark, and not only “Danish-inspired,” as before. The introduction stressed “our design office and model workshop” and Ikea’s own designer, Gillis Lundgren, was recognized in the catalog for his easy chair Ägget (the Egg), highlighting its modern materials in the heading “with form-pressed wood, foam plastic, and steel.”38

By the end of the 1950s, Ikea was closer to the other actors in conveying modern living. The 1959 catalog highlighted that Ikea had become a member of the SSF and, as

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36 Ibid., 9, 66. Swedish text: “ultramodern.”
37 Ibid., 74, 82
38 Ibid., 3, 27. Swedish text: “Vårt ritkontor och vår modellverkstad,” “det bästa i dansk möbelkonst,” “modell ÄGGET med formpressat trä, skumplast och stål.” The catalog also presents the chair Pige as a “Danish original model” and “Danish decorative arts,” 18, 63. The seating group Esbjerg, made of massive teak and oak, is even more prominently highlighted the following year, with an introduction under the heading “Danish original furniture” and a text about Ikea’s collaboration with one of Denmark’s leading furniture producers. Above the seating group, there is a Japanese-type of lamp that Lena Larsson promoted as an example of good TV furnishing. Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog -38, 27.
such, “seeks to promote information about the art of modern interiors.” For IKEA, it was an indication of approval. The catalog introduction announced that “internationally renowned architect Bengt Ruda is heading [a team of] well-known designers from Sweden and Denmark.” This was a result of Ingvar Kamprad’s capacity to build networks.

Kamprad, the founder and owner of IKEA, knew little about furniture and home furnishings when he started selling furniture in 1948, according to IKEA’s archivist Tony Nilsson. In the mid-1950s, however, Kamprad began creating the network that helped him build the competence that would lay the foundation for IKEA’s success, including ready-to-assemble furniture. In 1958, IKEA opened its first store in Älmhult, which featured the largest furniture showroom in the world.


40 Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog 1959, 5. Swedish text: “Välkända formgivare från Sverige och Danmark med internationellt välkända arkitekt Bengt Ruda i spetsen.” Having started in the fall of 1957, Bengt Ruda was welcomed in the 1958 catalog and introduced as particularly well known as a designer for young people, educated at what is today called Konstfack, University of Arts, Crafts, and Design, in Stockholm; Ruda had studied in England, Italy, and Switzerland, receiving grants from the SSF. Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog 1958, 9. A novelty in the 1959 catalog was a list of facts about IKEA: it was presented as Sweden’s biggest furnishing company; more than 55,000 families are said to have chosen IKEA in 1957, a number that was rising; municipal and county institutions as well as hotels and restaurants were among the company’s clients; IKEA’s furniture had attracted interest at the furniture fair in Cologne in 1958; several travel agencies had arranged their tours to pass by Älmhult, as the participants want to see IKEA; and the IKEA catalog was the most read interior furnishing catalog in the country, with a print run of over 400,000 copies. Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog 1959, 27. In 1960, the IKEA catalog went further and gave a full introduction with photos and a short presentation of five of their designers, all described as architects, all men, and all Danish except for Ruda: Bengt Ruda, Preben Fabricius, Erik Wørts, Arne Wahl-Iversen, and Th. Harlev. Gillis Lundgren is not among them, perhaps because he had dual roles as head of advertising and designer. Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog-60, 3; Katalog 1961, 5.

41 Tony Nilsson, archivist, Inter IKEA Culture Center AB, Älmhult, e-mail to author, February 13, 2017. As part of this networking and capacity-building, Nilsson gives examples of how Kamprad’s contacts introduced him to Karl-Erik Klote, who had worked at NK’s furniture workshop, and in turn led to Bengt Ruda, who had worked there with the Triva-Bygg knockdown furniture in flat packages with Erik Wørts, who started freelancing for the company in 1958. Kamprad is described as learning more about furniture through a couple of Danish producers, above all Karl Nielsen at Farstrup Savverk & Stolefabrik, with
To strengthen Ikea’s approach to modern design, the 1959 introduction emphasized how its designers “constantly work to renew and ameliorate products adjusted for our modern apartments,” suggesting an advisory mission: “That is why more and more people simply use the Ikea catalog as a current handbook of interior design.”\(^{43}\) For the first time, the Ikea catalog included proper advice on home furnishings. Under the heading “Some advice for you who are thinking about interiors,” Ruda used the publication to convey his thoughts, similar to the architects given space in the Bra bohag catalogs.\(^{44}\) With the practical in focus, Ruda spoke about the influence of different colors, the multipurpose kitchen table, the importance of the bed, and the living room, which he “would rather call the leisure room, as each member of the family shall seek the rest and recreation here they need after the rush of everyday life.”\(^{45}\) Discussing the need for comfortable seating furniture such as sofas and moveable easy chairs in the time of TV, bookshelves including storage and perhaps writing-surface, and a solid work table, the Ikea catalog had come closer to the advice publications like Bosättning and Allt i

\(^{42}\) Torekull, Leading by design, 43. It was 6,700 square meters.


\(^{44}\) Ibid., 21. Swedish text: “Några råd till Er med inredningstankar.”

\(^{45}\) Ibid. Swedish text: “Vardagsrummet eller jag skulle hellre vilja kalla det fritidsrummet då familjen här skall söka den avkoppling och rekreation som var och en behöver efter dagens jäkt.”
Hemmet, moving away from the historicizing suites that were markers of status earlier in the 1950s.\footnote{Ibid., 108-09. The Gustavian remained, as will be discussed below.}

**Toward Informal Entertaining at Home**

In the 1950s, entertaining in the home became more informal and simplified. A drawing in *Bosättning* showed three women and two men sitting in easily moveable chairs and a sofa. (Fig. 4.8) One man is reading a book in a Windsor-type chair, the other is smoking his pipe as he rests in a Bruno Mathsson chair, and one of the two women in the sofa is knitting. For those who could afford the space in the nineteenth century, the idealized scene of leisure saw men gathered in a smoking room while women withdrew to the drawing room or salon after dinner. In the twentieth-century living room, women and men socialized informally together, facilitated by the seating group and small tables. There were no glasses, food, or food-related utensils in *Bosättning*’s image, nothing that could possibly create mess. A fruit bowl that no one seems to touch is placed on the coffee table. The drawing is an updated, and pared down, version of a photograph of the same group enjoying an informal social gathering in the 1948 *Bosättning*. (Fig. 4.9)

Drawing on the ideal get-together from the official setting-up-home brochure, the 1959–1960 Bra bohag catalog featured an almost identical setting to the one featured in *Bosättning*. (Fig. 4.10) The picture in the catalog emphasizes a “freer way of furnishing” with comfort in mind, the catalog explained the importance of “the small and service-
minded tables.” Emulating the 1948 image from *Bosättning*, the people in the Bra bohag catalog are drinking fruit juice or soda and eat fruit; the man is smoking a cigarette instead of a pipe. The focus on juice and fruit corresponds to contemporary endeavors to diminish drinking, represented in one of the “homemaker films” presented in Swedish movie theaters, called “Liquid Fruit” (1954). Although a commercial endeavor, Bra bohag’s promotion of a wholesome lifestyle was in line with official advice. There are no glamorous or hedonistic desires in these representations, instead the picture is one of a seemingly ascetic approach to life and consumption, reflective of the overall fostering of reasonable consumers. At the same time, Ikea embraced cocktail cabinets as an item on “men’s wish lists.”

From its start in 1956, *Allt i Hemmet* promoted a more informal and unconventional lifestyle. Already in the second issue, the magazine encouraged readers to “bring the

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47 Bra bohag, *Bra bohag 1959-1960*, 13. Swedish text: “Nu då vi möblerar våra hem friare och mera med tanke på bekvämlighet än förr, då får de små och tjänstvilliga borden allt större vikt och betydelse.” The Windsor-type armchair by the window is replaced by an upholstered armchair with legs and armrests in teak. He also has a convenient pullout shelf from the teak coffee table, so as to have an ashtray and juice glass at hand. While he is reading, smoking, and talking, the woman on the couch is doing embroidery, and the other woman eats an apple, also having a handy little table by her chair with a glass of juice and a book. Both women look at the man. All three of them are dressed up, the man in brown suit and tie, the women in dresses and high-heeled shoes. A modern radio and record player complement the arrangement, also changing the way furnishings support comfortable sitting. The whole interior gives a subdued impression with its gray wall-to-wall carpet, white-gray walls, light-brown striped curtains, mustard-colored couch with dark-green easy chairs, along with the teak sofa table and oak small table. The abstract oil painting on the wall gives the interior a sophisticated look, a message that the Bra bohag collaboration seeks to convey.


guests into the kitchen." A feature of the magazine’s family kitchen was to invite guests there for dinner, not only the neighbor for coffee. As inspiration, Larsson captured the essence of contemporary informal entertainment in an article on how architect Elias Svedberg and his wife arranged their dinner parties. In describing this hospitable atmosphere, Larsson recounted how the guests felt as if they were helping out with the dinner while the loin of pork on a skewer broiled in the fireplace of the living room. The furniture provided an inviting, open space between sofa and coffee table, and the easy chairs were without armrests, allowing guests to turn in different directions to talk to people and move around. Her description is an example of how the objects around us, furniture in particular, influence and change our behavior and habits. (Fig. 4.11)

Larsson pointed out that “we must think about furnishing for a completely different type of get-together than the parties of the old days with their division between a female and male side.”

According to Larsson, the Svedbergs had created a fluid space. This was in opposition to the usual rigid arrangement of a seating group where you could hardly pass between the coffee table and the couch. Once you were seated in a deep easy chair, the

50 Eva Boman, “Ta med gästerna ut i köket,” Allt i Hemmet 1, no. 2 (1956): 26-29. Promoting simple dinners so that the homemaker does not need to stress between the stove and the table but rather prepares easily served pizza, quiche lorraine, cheese sticks, and meatballs: Cooking supplement “Husmor festar med Fruarna på Fruvik,” Allt i Hemmet 1, no. 9 (1956): 26-
52 Lena Larsson, “Det gästfria hemmet,” Allt i Hemmet 2, no. 1 (1957): 11-14, 56-57. Together with Elias Svedberg, Lena Larsson co-authored the book Heminredning and developed the knockdown furniture series Triva bygg, along with Erik Wörts. (See footnote 41) Svedberg was working as an architect for the fine department store Nordiska kompaniet, NK, in Stockholm.
53 For a thorough example, see for example Hellman, “Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century France,” 415-45.
evening might be spoiled as you were stuck where you were sitting. In addition, Larsson remarked, your clothes got wrinkled in such furniture. Like the Co-op’s *Vårt hem*, Larsson made the reader aware of practical details. The type of table legs allowed everyone to sit comfortably without getting a table leg in the way. The Danish chairs were stackable, a more important factor for Larsson than the point that they were examples of Jacobsen’s new *Ant* chair.\(^{55}\)

The Svedberg party illustrated a modern get-together, and advertisements further promoted casual socializing and dining at home. As in the case of the family kitchen, references were made to America. An advertisement for teak serving dishes stated, partly in English: “‘Help yourself . . .’—the nice and casual American way of throwing a dinner party is becoming more and more popular here in Sweden. Everybody feels at home and helps out . . . the hostess does not have to feel rushed to wait on everyone.”\(^{56}\) (Fig. 4.12)

Describing such a party as “nice and modern,” the picture shows a smiling, well-dressed couple in the kitchen, busily bringing a teak salad bowl and cutting cold meat at the kitchen counter pass-through while the other couple is seating themselves at the kitchen table. Advertisements promoting mustard showed leisurely dressed couples seated on

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 14.

cushions on the floor by the fireplace, drinking beer, and grilling sausages in the fire.\(^{57}\) (Fig. 4.13) A set of cutlery called *Party* advertised suggested occasions: the barbeque, the teenage gathering, the directly-out-of-the-pantry sandwich, take-it-as-we-have-it dinner, and watching-TV snack.\(^{58}\) The move toward simplifying dinner parties and household goods included paper napkins, still folded in various shapes like a traditional linen napkin and advertised without mentioning that they were made of paper.\(^{59}\)

\(^{57}\) “Slotts-senap AB Uppsala ättiksfabrik” advertisement, several in *Allt i Hemmet*: no. 9 (1956), no. 1, 3, 6 (1957), no. 1 (1958). Also at Svedberg’s, the food was prepared in the fireplace, which became fashionable in Sweden in the 1950s. Outside the scope of this study, but as an illustration to the close link between advertisers and magazines, the Svedberg article was featured in the same issue as one of the mustard advertisements along with an article on how to install such a fireplace.

\(^{58}\) “Guldsmedsaktiebolaget i Stockholm, G.A.B” advertisement, *Allt i Hemmet* 2, no. 6 (1957): 74. Swedish text: “Party – det nya, roliga vickningsbesticket . . . det linjerena, piffiga och praktiska vickningsbesticket *Party!* PARTY passar också perfekt till: Bio-supén, Grill-måltiden, Knytkalaset, Utflykten, Tonårsträffen, Bridge-mellanmålet, Direkt-ur-skafferiet-smörgåsen, Te-bjundningen, Ta-det-som-vi-har-dent-middagen, Söndagens trivsel-lunch, Båt-målet, TV-tittar-tilltugget.” As a rational reassurance in the midst of all the fun, the producer noted that *Party* was “easy to wash thanks to its lack of angles and hard-to-reach ornaments.” Swedish text: “Party är lättdiskad tack vare all avsaknad av svåråtkomliga vinklar och mönster.” Another party cutlery combines the knife, fork, and spoon for “modern habits” in front of the television, at the bridge game, or as a complement to a late-night supper: “Piruett tre i ett – en ny, frisk välvårdad idé! Piruett ger Er allt i ett – gaffel, kniv och sked – partybesticket för moderna vanor! Vid TV-supén, bridgevickningen, nattsexan…” *Allt i Hemmet* 4, no. 5 (1959): 71. The Co-op also encouraged customers to engage in more informal entertainment by advertising: “Be modern – get together with a sandwich!” depicting a happy couple eating sandwiches with their hands, certainly challenging conventional parties where you would eat with knife and fork. “KF Svea Olympia S:t Pedersgatan 15 umgås med SMÖRGÅS” advertisement, KF Svea (collection of the Royal Library), 1959. Furthermore, there were several advertisements promoting soft cheeses, one including a dressed-up couple ready for a “festive evening at home” with cheese, candles, wine, at an elegant table with white tablecloth and intricately folded napkins, the Camembert cheese obviously promoted as something new and festive. “Désirée Camembert” advertisement, *Allt i Hemmet* 2, no. 9 (1957): 55. Swedish text: Dukat för festlig hemmakväll . . . med Désirée Camembert.” Other advertisements were for example various blue cheeses along with a bottle of wine, Mejeriföreningen Örebro, *Allt i Hemmet* 3, no. 3 (1958): back cover, and advertisement from the national association of Swedish dairies, *Allt i Hemmet* 2, no. 5 (1957).

\(^{59}\) “Duni en Billingsfors-produkt” advertisement, *Allt i Hemmet* 4, no. 2 (1959): 5. Duni promoted festive table settings with paper napkins and had even asked students at Konstfack, the University of Arts, Crafts and Design, to come up with different ways of folding, depicted in the advertisement and further shown in a brochure to pick up in the store.
Educating the Consumer

Larsson used the unconventional but correct Svedberg party to also foster rational consumption. While emphasizing how a party did not have to be expensive or follow the conventional rules of table settings and togetherness to be successful, it could rather be festive through small details in the food and flowers. Within certain rational limits, however, as the plates were plain, preferably white, or yellow if earthenware, with plain linen table mats underneath. “Patterned china is usually more complicated to use,” Larsson remarked. The advisory publications provided “rules” so that the reasonable consumer could learn how to set the table and what to mix and match. The simple, white settings and décor were better than the more elaborately decorated ones, and there was no need for a specific dinner service for festive occasions. Allt i Hemmet rejected the traditional 58-piece dinner service, citing lack of space and impracticality: “We prefer buying separate pieces that work as they should on the table. Therefore, the compulsion of the complete dinner service is gone.”

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60 Larsson, “Det gästfria hemmet,” 11, 14, 57. Swedish text: “Mönstrat porslin är ofta besvärligare att använda.”
61 Henrikson, Vårt hem, 65-67; Wärn Bugge and Ralf, eds., Bosättning (1955), 43-44. Allt i Hemmet further conveyed a similar message about pieces of everyday china for festive occasions, including Grå ränder from Gustavsberg, which would be easy to combine in different ways, along with stainless steel cutlery, ovenproof pots, and tablecloths that were easier to care for than white linen. Lena Larsson, “Fest på vardagsporslin,” Allt i Hemmet 4, no. 5 (1959): 44-46, 105; Lena Larsson and Marianne Fredriksson, “ABC för dukning,” Allt i Hemmet 2, no. 8 (1957): 19, including “the six rules of table settings” with images labeled “right” and “wrong.”
62 Maj-Britt Höglund, “Vad är keramik-stengods-benporslin-flintgods-fajans,” Allt i Hemmet 1, no. 6 (1956): 37. Swedish text: “Nu har vi knappt plats för den traditionella servisen på 58 delar längre och vad mer är: vi har kommit underfund med att en del av dem inte var särskilt praktiska. Vi köper hellre enheter som fungerar som de skall på matbordet. Servistvånget är alltså borta.” The article also stated that the last service of more than 200 pieces came in 1937. The official setting-up-home advice in Bosättning, however, was not as straightforward as Allt i Hemmet: “It is not certain that a service of 23 or 58 pieces with 6 or 12 plates respectively is the most appropriate: eight of each is often a better number.” Wärn Bugge and Ralf, eds., Bosättning (1955), 42. Swedish text: “Det är inte säkert att en servis på 23 eller 58 delar med 6 resp. 12 tallrikar av varje alltid är det lämpligaste; åtta av varje slag är många gånger ett bättre antal.”
My parents are an example of precisely this ideal. For their wedding in 1954, they received gifts such as gratin dishes that could go directly from the oven and still look nice on the table; practical yet decorative stainless steel cutlery and serving plates that did not need to be polished; and an Orrefors Fuga glass bowl, mass-produced through centrifugal force, stackable, and plain in form and surface. They did not collect a specific dinner service, instead buying different plates from Swedish porcelain factories and receiving odd serving dishes as wedding gifts.63

_Bosättning_ started its section on choosing china by stating: “Let functional form and technical quality decide the choice of china. It is important that the pitcher’s handle fits well into the hand, that the handle of the coffee cup is easy to grasp, and that all parts are easy to wash up.”64 Objecting to the return of romantic flowery patterns, _Allt i Hemmet’s_ Birgit Sunesson concluded: “An undecorated white cup is like it is without any

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63 As consumer guidance became more common, the Co-op, _Bosättning_, and _Allt i Hemmet_ all explained the difference between types of china and promoted simplified household goods such as ovenproof pots and dishes that could also be put on the table, thus minimizing the number of dishes to clean. The magazine claimed that their series of surveys of different materials, household machines, etc., was the first of its kind in Scandinavia. Promoting flatware of stainless steel, however, _Bosättning_ acknowledged that a small set of silverware could perhaps be acquired over time as gifts. Höglund, “Vad är keramik-stengods-benporslin-flintgods-fajans,” 36–42. Wærn Bugge and Ralf, eds., _Bosättning_ (1955), 42–46; Henrikson, _Vårt hem_, 64–67. Also, the producer Gustavsberg advertised various kinds of china, including the fire-proof _Terma_. “En nypa varukunskap kvalitet till vardags Gustavsberg” advertisement, _Allt i Hemmet_ 3, no. 11 (1958): 6. IKEA did not sell household goods more than in the first catalog of 1951, and their assortment followed their explicit ambition, at least in the early years, to accommodate different types of taste. There were two models of stainless steel cutlery in 1951, one more ornate, called _Kägleholms slottsmodell_ (the palace style of Kägleholm), and _Gammalsvensk modell_ (old Swedish style), described as “timeless” and thus “always modern.” IKEA, _Katalog_ 1951, 60–61. There was a company called Hemservice providing household goods at low prices that the IKEA catalog promoted in, for example, the 1961 catalog, page 9, stating that a brochure was attached to the catalog and that the company had started a couple of years earlier to provide for those who are setting up home.

disguise.” Her arguments reflect Ellen Key and other design reformers of the nineteenth century, who argued that the beauty of an object comes from its function and form. The development of consumer guidance and the rise of the educated consumer would take on increasing importance in the following years.

According to the 1960 *God bostad*, a finer meal on Sundays was an occasion for the family to gather in the living room. As the housing board had concluded, most family apartments had both a seating group consisting of a sofa and two chairs, and a dining set in the living room. In spite of the formality of the “Sunday Dinner” in the 1959–1960 Bra bohag catalog, the representation reveals signs of simplification for household goods and related work noticeable in the advisory literature. (Fig. 4.14) In the image, a family is about to have dinner in the living room. The whole family is dressed up, school age children and the father are seated at the teak table looking full of expectation as the mother arrives with her teak tea trolley. Hands are neatly placed on the table, according to good Swedish table manners. The father wears a dark suit and bow tie, the son a wool sweater and tie, and the girl, her hair neatly in a ponytail, wears a red-checkered dress and matching pumps. Following the recommendations in the official setting-up-home brochure, there is a contemporary graphic print on the wall. On the teak sideboard, called

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67 Ikea had not started placing people in photographs of their interiors, and this was Bra bohag’s first catalog showing people in many of the depicted interiors. The 1958 catalog of Bra bohag had a few images with people: one couple in the bedroom, also seen in Dux advertisements, one woman reading a magazine on the carpet, and three teenagers in their room. The Sunday dinner was the only meal featured in the 1959-60 catalog, while the other interiors with people featured two women setting or folding out a table, the same Dux image of a couple in the bedroom, a woman showing the bedroom to a couple of friends, and four images of two or three people socializing in the living room, including fig. 4.10.
Trento, are a bowl of oranges, a decorative ceramic bowl, a jar by well-known artist Signe Persson-Melin, and a stylized wooden rooster from a handicraft shop—a touch that also lives up to the recommendations in *Bosättning*. There are daisies on the dining table, a glass bowl (probably *Fuga*), and plain yellow and white dishes, bowls, and plates. The only decoration is a simple line around the rim on some plates. So far, everything could be taken from the advisory literature and *Allt i Hemmet*. The woman, dressed in a subdued green-blue dress and high heels, arrives with boiled potatoes, Sunday steak, vegetables on a white dish, and a white pitcher. There are white bowls for dessert and new coffee cups, *Spisa ribb* from Gustavsberg, a factory owned by the Co-op. The ideal consumption depicted was rational and ascetic in its low-key practicality and absence of extravagance, but it was formal in the observance of the occasion.

Despite the traditional gender roles and the formal setting, the Bra bohag image suggests a more simplified and informal way of running the household. Instead of a tablecloth covering the table, there are placemats of linen or cotton so that the woman does not have to do all the work of washing, mangling, and folding a large piece of textile; the placemats might be easily reused or washed. The promotion of such items was part of textile designer Astrid Sampe’s ambition to simplify and modernize linen storage in Sweden in the 1950s. According to an investigation, however, referred to in an advertisement for linen tablecloths and napkins, “more than one million Swedish

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68 See for example Wærn Bugge and Ralf, eds., *Bosättning* (1955), 44.
housewives set the Sunday dining table with a linen tablecloth!”\(^7\) (Fig. 4.15) Instead of elaborate folding, the napkins are simply placed next to the plate on the table in Bra bohag’s “Sunday Dinner.”

Another sign of simplification is *Focus de Luxe*, presented at the H55 exhibition as an inventive flatware using the new material nylon along with stainless steel. Sterling silver would traditionally be the choice for a Sunday meal, but now there was no need to polish. Following a rational ideal, *Focus de Luxe* was a flatware for everyday use and festive occasions. In the Bra bohag catalog, an illustration shows how well it fits in the felt-clad drawer intended for flatware in the sideboard.\(^7\)

While this representation of the Sunday dinner seems traditionally arranged in its formality, it suggests a developing sense of simplification in the 1950s. Fostering the reasonable consumer in guidance literature would be increasingly apparent in the 1960s. Furniture changes, such as the lower coffee tables and comfortable chairs adjusted to watching TV and informal entertainment, reveal how people’s habits changed. Similarly, the serviceable objects around them, the *Party* cutlery, placemats, or the easily served food, also reflect changing times. The furniture, the type of socializing represented, the household goods themselves, and the food served all show how far entertaining at home had changed in the mid twentieth century.

\(^7\) Bra bohag, *Bra bohag 1959-60*, 11.
Chapter Five

Sleep Research and Promotion of a Better Bed Culture

“If you have an apartment of two rooms, would you consider using one room exclusively as a bedroom?”1 Ikea’s question from its interior design service reveals that it was not an obvious choice in the 1950s. There was a great range of sofa beds on the market that corresponded to ways of arranging sleeping places. In order to promote a better bed culture in homes, the bed became the subject of research, engaging a broad range of actors—state agencies and organizations such as the Co-op as well as Ikea, Bra bohag, and Allt i Hemmet. In this chapter, I argue that these actors were important mediators in disseminating the research and new ideals. As in the case of the Swedish standard kitchen, Ikea was an early adapter and promoter of these trends and also benefited from the new state-supported comparative consumer guidance.

Sleeping in the Living Room

The most common piece of furniture in the living room of the 1950s was the convertible couch, as many Swedes still had to use the living room as a bedroom or space to put up visiting relatives.2 The official view in the 1954 God bostad confirmed that, for

1 Ikéa, Katalog 1955, 5. Swedish text: “4. Om Ni har en tvårummare, skulle Ni då kunna tänka Er att disponera ett rum endast som sovrum?”
2 Larsson, “Ett dynamiskt årtionde,” 292. The first Ikea catalogue, from 1951, confirmed that it was common to sleep in the living room, preferably disguising sleeping places during waking hours. Out of thirteen sofas or other long pieces for sitting, eight were for sleeping: five sofa beds, one double ottoman (a long seat with no back also serving as a bed and with another bed to pull out underneath), and two daybeds, also for two people. In addition, the only kitchen couch in the catalog was intended for sleeping. The
economic and other reasons, many families—perhaps the majority—could not count on a dwelling where parents and children would have private sleeping spaces.\textsuperscript{3} Most apartments were small in Sweden, and almost half of the dwellings in Stockholm in 1950 had just one room and a kitchen or were even smaller, with a combined kitchen and living space.\textsuperscript{4}

Therefore, the housing board stated in 1954 and 1960 that the living room should also be able to serve as a bedroom for the parents.\textsuperscript{5} The official recommendation in \textit{Bosättning} was that the parents sleep in the living room, as the children “need a separate room.”\textsuperscript{6} The HFI also recommended separating children and parents so as to meet the need for married life.\textsuperscript{7} Yet, even in 1959, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} needed to promote the idea that one room be reserved for children in an article about "the art of living in a one-bedroom apartment."\textsuperscript{8} Brita Åkerman’s 1937 report from her investigation of 214 families had concluded the same thing.\textsuperscript{9} The modernist ideal was to separate functions and, therefore, ideally have separate bedrooms, moving away from what was considered an old,

overall aim in the first Ikea catalog was thus to disguise sleeping places in the living room, including a cabinet bed presented next to one of the three dining sets. Paired with a matching cabinet bed for two, the dining set was far from the ideal modern living room, both because it was a complete furniture suite and because the disguised beds had simple chain bottoms. Ikea also introduced the bed \textit{Anita}, with a spring mattress, stating that, as you spend a third of your life in bed, it’s worth spending a bit more for a comfortable bed. The beds were presented as twin beds with a bedstead. Ikéa, \textit{Katalog 1951}, 4-34.

\textsuperscript{3} Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, \textit{God bostad} (1954), 12.
\textsuperscript{4} Johansson, ed., \textit{Bostadsvanor och bostadsnormer}, 13. The number was 46%.
\textsuperscript{5} Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, \textit{God bostad} (1954), 10, and \textit{God bostad 1960}, 23. In the 1960 publication, there is an addition that notes the living room may not be a room giving access to another room.
\textsuperscript{6} Wärn Bugge and Ralf, eds., \textit{Bosättning} (1955), 9.
\textsuperscript{8} Marianne Fredriksson and Lena Larsson, “Konsten att bo i en 2-rummare,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 4, no. 11 (1959): 38-43.
\textsuperscript{9} Åkerman, \textit{Familjen som växte ur sitt hem}, 35.
unhygienic habit of sleeping in the kitchen. This is also the message that *Allt i Hemmet* gave in the magazine’s Readers’ Queries, responding to a couple who expressed their frustration that they could no longer fit in the apartment’s bedroom with their two children. Should one family member sleep in the kitchen? *Allt i Hemmet*’s answer was clear: “The kitchen should absolutely not be used as a sleeping place.” According to the magazine, the parents should move to the living room and make use of a convertible couch or possibly two beds placed at an angle. This became the recommended arrangement.

**Standardizing Bed Dimensions**

The kitchen was not the only target for standardization and rationalization in Sweden. Åkerman, the deputy director of the SSF, noted in 1948 that the functionality of furniture should be researched in a similarly systematic way. She had testified that many children suffered under overcrowded living conditions and that they were forced to share beds or sleep in beds that were hidden during the day. The simple process of making up the beds for a family of four took half an hour, which, she argued, was a daily source of irritation for the homemaker. Doctors had long reported the low quality of beds in Sweden, and housing surveys revealed that Swedes slept on a variety of improvised surfaces such as ottomans, kitchen couches, and folding beds. There were 60 different

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bed sizes on the market in the late 1940s, most of them too short or too narrow for a typical adult.\textsuperscript{12}

Hence, beds were the focus of the first investigation into the functionality of furniture that the SSF undertook in 1948 through furniture designer Erik Berglund.\textsuperscript{13} As an illustration of Swedish society’s corporatist tradition of collaboration between the state and various organizations and institutions, this research project employed a number of organizations and state agencies. These included Aktiv hushållning (Active Housekeeping, the predecessor of the Swedish Consumer Agency) and state-funded agencies such as the HFI and the Swedish Institute for Standards, organizations such as the Co-op, and professional organizations of architects, furniture dealers and producers, along with the state University of Arts, Crafts and Design.\textsuperscript{14}

This far-reaching furniture investigation illustrates the eagerness of reformers and designers to research functionality and define standardized solutions in Sweden at the time; the approach was as serious and scientific as in the work to develop a standard kitchen. The researchers tested how a person, whether male or female, moved during the night to determine necessary bed measurements. They measured ergonomics to determine the height necessary for easy cleaning under a bed, and they also studied the space

\textsuperscript{12} Boman, “Vardagens decennium,” 271-73.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. See also Erik Berglund, \textit{Tala om kvalitet: Om möbelmarknaden och brukarorienterad produktutveckling} (Västerljung: Bokförlaget Axplock, 1997).
needed around a bed. (Fig. 5.1) This resulted in three standard sizes for beds and mattresses—80, 85, and 90 cm wide, the measurement of a person spreading out his or her elbows—and 195 cm long, larger than most beds on the market.\textsuperscript{15}

**Raising the Standards for Bed Culture**

The results of the furniture investigation revealed a unified mission to raise the standard of the bed, which was tied to a growing awareness of quality and hygiene in the 1950s. The term used was a “bed culture,” suggesting that these recommendations were not just about standardizing measurements, but encompassed an entire way of living with furniture. This is evident in *Allt i Hemmet*, the Ikea catalog, and advice literature published by various organizations. In each of these publications, the same type of images—if not the same—presented different kinds of spring and rubber mattresses and different types of beds that reflected the research published in 1950 by the SSF.\textsuperscript{16}

In 1952, Active Housekeeping published a brochure called *Bädda rätt och sova gott* (*Make the Bed Right and Sleep Tight*). It included thorough information about different qualities of beds and mattresses, with detailed images of springs and horsehair padding. At a time when the market was full of different kinds of convertible couches, Active

\textsuperscript{15} Boman, “Vardagens decennium,” 271, and Berglund, Bülow-Hübe, and Engholm-Carlström, *Bäddmöbler*. Erik Berglund’s next research project focused on tables, with the results reported in *Allt i Hemmet*. This is another sign of the utilitarian and serious approach to research on the home in Sweden. In his book on tables, Berglund establishes that “each person needs elbow space of 58 cm while eating. The minimal table for everyday use in a small family should be 70x120 cm.” The *Allt i Hemmet* article also discusses the pros and cons of different kinds of table surfaces. Fredriksson and Larsson, “Vi sitter i köket,” 29-35.

Housekeeping promoted real beds intended for sleeping, rather than the more common uncomfortable and unhygienic combination pieces: “It is more important that one sleeps well in eight hours and perhaps not sit equally comfortably for a couple of hours, than the opposite.”\(^{17}\)

Other publications offered similar solutions. Ikea spread this thinking in their catalog, acknowledging that all double sofa beds and double daybeds were insufficient as furniture for sleeping, with impractical or heavy construction and lack of space for bed linen.\(^{18}\) The setting-up-home brochure was equally direct: “Avoid a sofa bed with two sleeping-places. They are in general clumsy and uncomfortable.”\(^{19}\) The Co-op also stressed that the comfort of the bed should be the most important consideration in furniture that is also used for sitting.\(^{20}\) Applying further the advice of the state agency, *Allt i Hemmet* followed almost word for word the suggestions in *Bädda rätt och sova gott*. Lena Larsson and Marianne Fredriksson argued for real beds of good quality to support eight hours of sleep per day, far more than is spent sitting in the living room; in their vision of future economy, the beds could be moved into the bedroom when one acquired a bigger apartment with three rooms.\(^{21}\)

Like Ikea and the Co-op, *Allt i Hemmet* disseminated the official ideal of how to arrange sleeping places in the living room of a smaller apartment. A space-saving and

\(^{17}\) Svenonius and Lyberg, *Bädda rätt och sova gott*, 38-39. Svenonius came to work with the Ikea catalog in the early 1960s; see the section on the Ikea catalog as a source of advice in chapter six.


\(^{21}\) Lena Larsson and Marianne Fredriksson, “5 sätt att sova i vardagsrummet,” *Allt i Hemmet* 2, no. 10 (1957): 33-34.
practical suggestion in *Bädda rätt och sova gott* was to place real beds at an angle in the living room, another idea that spread. An early adapter, Ikea had already presented an angular placement of beds in the living room in 1953, using the rotating bed called *Swing* with spring mattresses under the slogan “*Swing* creates good bed culture even in small apartments.”\(^{22}\) (Fig. 5.2) The official setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning* presented beds in an angle as a way “to create an inviting corner” in the living room, and Bra bohag also featured the same solution.\(^{23}\) (Fig. 5.3) In *Allt i Hemmet’s* article on five ways to sleep in the living room, Fredriksson and Larsson presented a similar arrangement with the help of a setting-up-home consultant, represented as official advice.\(^{24}\) (Fig. 5.4)

Another suggestion in *Allt i Hemmet* had its direct equivalent in illustrations in *Bädda rätt och sova gott* and *Bosättning*: two beds upholstered with furniture fabric placed along the wall to make a long sofa, with the bed linen kept separately during the day.\(^{25}\)

As in the case of kitchen cabinets, Ikea saw the advantage of linking their products to ongoing scientific research. Following the same physical approach as the SSF’s investigation of beds, the second Ikea catalog (1952) featured drawings of a person lying in the “right” and “wrong” anatomical position on “the most important piece of furniture

\(^{22}\) *Ikéa, Katalog 1953*, 12. Swedish text: “Swing skapar god sängkultur även i små lägenheter.”


\(^{24}\) Larsson and Fredriksson, “5 sätt att sova i vardagsrummet,” 33. Her name was Birgit Zetterquist. Such consultants hired by the state and by organizations such as the Co-op (KF), HSB, and women’s organizations had existed since the late 1930s. Womack, *Sovrummet*, 67.

The correct position was achieved on a firm spring mattress, where the body could rest straight, rather than sink down in a U-shaped bend. (Fig. 5.5) In promoting Ikea’s spring mattresses, several catalogs referred to “modern science” to support the importance of resting the body in the right position in order to get sufficient rest. In 1955, the catalog even used the inside cover to promote the spring mattress Aveny, then Ikea’s best-selling article, through scientific research: “Your mood and general well-being depend highly on sleep and rest. The Home Research Institute also establishes that the bed is the most important piece of furniture in the home.” (Fig. 5.6) The accompanying image features a smiling woman showing a couple of twin beds and how they swing out for easy cleaning, another feature of the hygienic and utilitarian ideal of the time.

To raise the consumer’s awareness of quality, the state and various institutions established the trade description commission, Varudeklarationsnämnden (VDN), in 1951. This quality control organization also benefited Ikea. The commission’s purpose was to give comparative consumer guidance through standardized tests and informative labels on household goods, electrical appliances, food, textiles, and so on. In 1953, furniture

26 Ikéa, Katalog 1952, 32. The same drawings were featured in the Ikea catalogs of (1953), 32; (1954), 30; (1955), 44; and (1956), 48.  
27 Ikéa, Katalog (1953), 32; (1954), 30, along with the anatomical drawings of the right and wrong positions for lying in bed, which were also included in 1952 without mentioning “science.” The drawing of the right position was also used next to the Aveny beds in 1958, 52. Swedish text 1954: “Den moderna vetenskapen har konstaterat och understryker med skärpa att det är mycket noga med hur man ligger för att man skall vila ordentligt.”  
28 Ikéa, Katalog 1955, inside cover, 2. It should be noted that this is the first catalog in which there are photographs of people, this woman and another woman reading on top of a bed, 41. Swedish text: “Ert humör och allmänna välbefinnande beror i hög grad på sömn och vila. Hemmens Forskningsinstitut konstaterar också att sången är hemmets viktigaste möbel.”  
29 Nationalencyklopedin, s.v. “varudeklaration.” VDN ended in 1973 when the new state agency,
was added to the commission’s mandate and Erik Berglund became its secretary. In corporatist tradition, the board of the VDN was comprised of the two large unions, the LO and the TCO, the Co-op, women’s organizations such as the HFI, as well as trade and industry. To buy quality products was also a key point that the central bank and the SSF conveyed in *Bosättning*: “Buy good quality. This is especially important when it comes to things that will suffer wear and tear. It is better to have fewer cooking utensils of good quality than many bad ones, fewer towels but ones that are strong and pliable, and so on.” Further fostering rational consumption, the Co-op’s setting-up-home book *Vårt hem* appreciated the increasingly common VDN labels, giving the example of mattresses, where the consumer otherwise had difficulty judging materials that went into their manufacture.

Ikea, a mail order company whose business model was based on its low prices, had not been readily accepted in the furniture and design world; it was a watershed when the company received the highest VDN ranking for its foam rubber mattresses in 1956. In a spread in the 1957 catalog, Ikea presented the advantages of its foam rubber mattresses *Sencello*, giving the VDN emblem a prominent place and again arguing through “the latest achievements of science” that *Sencello* is anatomically correct, a pure, natural

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Konsumentverket, the Swedish Consumer Agency, took over its function.

30 Berglund, *Tala om kvalitet*, 32.


33 Henrikson, *Vårt hem*, 26
product, airy, dust free, durable in form, and bacteria repellent, among other qualities.\(^{34}\) (Figs. 5.7-8) Addressing the homemaker directly, the argument in the text emphasized the mattress’ hygienic qualities: “FOAM RUBBER— for the combined bed- and living room. You escape the dust that inexorably comes with mattresses of older type. If you choose teak surfaces, cleaning will be reduced to a minimum. THE HOMEMAKER’S BEST HELP!”\(^{35}\)

If Ikea promoted their beds and quality-controlled mattresses supported by science, then Allt i Hemmet drew on old agrarian society for their models of modern living, as in the family kitchen. “Do not be ashamed of sleeping in the living room” was the first message Larsson and Fredriksson presented in their feature “5 ways to sleep in the living room,” highlighting beds that were placed at an angle.\(^ {36}\) Instead of sleeping in an uncomfortable bed made from a convertible couch that pretended to be something else during the day, the magazine encouraged readers to look at the old farmhouses at the Skansen open-air museum to illustrate how a bed with a white crocheted bedspread was central in the “living room” in the old days; clearly people were not ashamed of sleeping there. Larsson and Fredriksson thought that the idea of “camouflaging the bed” arose from the modern Swedish desire to turn the living room into a fine room with elegant

\(^{34}\) Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog 1957, 46. Swedish text: “Det är det skumgummi där vetenskapens senaste rön har tillämpats.”

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 47. Swedish text: “SKUMGUMMI – just i det kombinerade sov- och vardagsrummet. Ni slipper det damm som obönhörligt hör ihop med madrasser av äldre typ. Väljer Ni därtill teak-ytor kommer städningsarbetet att reduceras till ett minimum. HUSMORS BÄSTA HJÄLP!”

\(^{36}\) Larsson and Fredriksson, “5 sätt att sova i vardagsrummet,” 31-36. Swedish text: “Skäms inte för att ni sover i vardagsrummet.”
furniture. “We gave up good sleep and were also cheated of elegance, for the traditional sofa bed is an ugly and clumsy piece of furniture.”

The magazine had not made a point of commenting on taste before, rather, for example, welcoming people’s need for a parlor with ornamental wall clocks. In this case, however, the authors argued against conventional taste and appearances, highlighting instead practical arguments in support for the quality of sleep. When it came to physical well-being, they thus promoted what they thought was the most practical and best solution. Nevertheless, when it came to the gilded wall clock, they recognized other, psychological, significance for the owner.

**The Controversial Double Bed**

Ikea, *Allt i Hemmet*, and others actively spread the state agency’s mission regarding bed culture, but on one point they differed—the question of the double bed. Neither *Bosättning* nor the Co-op book *Vårt hem* mentioned the double bed as an option, and the experts at Active Housekeeping argued against it: “The double bed, very common in Southern Europe, cannot for practical reasons be recommended for ordinary Swedish families.”

Their argument was not based on morality, but rather utility and hygiene. Active Housekeeping took its task seriously and advocated the rational and hygienic care of the

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bed, such as daily airing of bed linen at an open window and turning the mattress daily.\textsuperscript{39} Obviously, this would be difficult with a double bed, the state agency argued: “A decent double bed is at least 150–160 cm wide, and the bed equipment then becomes very heavy and difficult to handle when cleaning and washing. Therefore, two twin beds placed next to each other are preferable.”\textsuperscript{40} To argue against the double bed for practical reasons illustrated an overall theme of hygienic and rational solutions for housekeeping and a desire to elevate the “bed culture” of Sweden after years of inadequate sleeping arrangements evident in housing surveys. The argument for hygiene was persuasive, since tuberculosis had been a common disease, only curable in 1945 following the introduction of mass vaccination.\textsuperscript{41}

Contemporary advertisements show couples in their twin beds. The full-page advertisements for the Bra bohag firm Dux appearing in \textit{Allt i Hemmet} issues in the late 1950s show a husband and wife in their twin beds, modestly placed apart with a bedside table between them.\textsuperscript{42} (Fig. 5.9) In the advertisement, the woman sits on her bedside,
combing her long blond hair with her perfectly manicured red nails matching her red lipstick, her romantic white negligee with frills and flowers spreading over the bed. Her husband lies in his bed wearing dark-blue pajamas reading a book, but he looks admiringly at his wife. The heading reads: “The most comfortable time of the day.” Although shown in separate beds, the couple is obviously engaged and interested in each other.

andatory suggestion for a double bed took a different direction, unusual and modern at the time, that was more directly evocative of intimacy than the hidden messages in the Dux advertisement. Having presented other bed alternatives with economical and practical arguments, Fredriksson and Larsson introduced the double bed as an “often very cozy solution.” Saving the double bed for their fifth and last suggestion in a 1957 article, they arranged the image to look spatially inviting, with an upholstered corner wall and a tray in the middle of the large bed. To further convey the double bed as an attractive solution, the cover featured a woman comfortably lounging in the big bed, cake in hand, and magazines ready to read. (Fig. 5.10)

The double bed was not yet considered standard, but Allt i Hemmet informed its readers that a 140 cm wide option was available. While no sheets were wide enough to cover such a broad bed (existing sheets would need to overlap), wide covers could be

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ordered. Nonetheless, the double bed became increasingly popular; the following year, Ikea introduced the double bed *Aveny Grand lit* in response to customer demand.

The question of choosing a double bed instead of twin beds or separate bedrooms, if possible, was a topic of discussion in the 1950s, according to *Allt i Hemmet*. That the magazine conveyed modern and unconventional living was already clear in the very first issue in 1956, where the key message to a couple was to ignore what people said and sleep in the same bed if they desired. A feature adjacent to the article had two psychologists discussing the issue and encouraging couples to see what worked best for them in terms of bed arrangements.

The Bedroom—a Space for Privacy

Compared with otherwise matter-of-fact approaches to bed research, Fredriksson was outspoken in her directness about what the bed entailed: “A bed is so much more than a piece of furniture to sleep on. It is in the bed that we experience the most intense togetherness, it is there we give and take confidences, give security to a little child afraid of the dark, relax, cry out, daydream...” Larsson was not only a key influencer in *Allt i Hemmet*; she also had a platform in the Bra bohag catalog and had been in charge of the...
interior in one of the Swedish apartments at the Interbau exhibition in Berlin in 1957. Using the same image of the couple as in the Dux advertisement, Larsson promoted the bed as the most important piece of furniture for tenderness and togetherness in a Bra bohag catalog article headed “Our life in bed.” Where Active Housekeeping tied the double bed to southern European customs, she openly admired other countries’ ability to be “more naturally frank than most of us dare to be, when we stand in the furniture shop talking about buying a bed.” In the following catalog, Larsson is even more direct: “most children exist in our thoughts long before they exist in real life.” The bed, she says, “has given us experiences of small heaven on earth that we do not want to be without.” In comparison with other sources, this is an unusually outspoken way of talking about the role of the bed in life, a perspective that exemplifies Allt i Hemmet’s modern tone.

When Bra bohag began in the late 1950s, more people were able to have a separate bedroom, but the company’s catalogs also targeted wider socioeconomic groups, many of whom already had a bedroom. While the official setting-up-home brochure promoted a space for the sewing machine along with a dressing table, Bra bohag focused mainly on the private role of the bedroom. In their second catalog, from 1957–1958, they invited five leading interior designers to advise on different rooms. While showing the practical arrangement of angular beds in the living room discussed above, they also featured

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Larsson’s restful big bedroom from the Interbau exhibition in Berlin, with its wall-to-wall carpeting (a new feature at the time), comfortable chairs in blue and purple, and small tables with candles and coffee cups, in addition to twin beds placed separate and perpendicular from the green wall.  

Further promoting the bedroom as a space for privacy and relaxation, interior designer Gunnar Myrstrand stated: “The stressed people of today greatly need a peaceful corner to which they can withdraw.” Myrstrand’s scheme included wall-to-wall-carpeting, as well as a coffee cup and toaster in the bedroom along with a radio, a telephone, toiletries, and some ornaments. Parallel to the discussion of the parlor as a private space—and in line with Larsson’s bedroom at Interbau—a woman depicted in the Bra bohag catalog shows the bedroom to her girlfriend, while her husband’s silhouette stands in the doorway; she says: “When I want to rest and take it easy for a while, then I take a book or handicraft and go to the bedroom to sit! We have furnished it as the parents’ own private space.” Bra bohag followed Larsson and Allt i Hemmet in promoting the bedroom as a room to relax in. As we will see, in the 1960s, the ideal bedroom became an even more multi-functional room.

Above all, Fredriksson and Larsson encouraged people to think of their own needs and be willing to challenge the conventions of how to furnish a bedroom. As Larsson

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51 Bra bohag, Bra bohag 1957-58, 7. Lena Larsson was among the five interior designers; her article was “The eating place in the all-room,” 6. See also Fredriksson, “Svenskt ‘storkök’ i Berlin,” 17-18.
argued, “Is it really reasonable that almost all bedrooms be furnished like twins? The same twin beds, the same bedside tables, the same lamps, carpets, and chairs, with few possibilities for variation and individual choices.” To resolve this problem, their articles promoted a range of different types of furnishings, separate bedrooms or not, with or without a double bed, and often with the possibility to relax in a comfortable armchair.

Other organizations took longer to address variants in bedroom arrangement. Ikea had not yet begun to stage elaborate interiors with props as Bra bohag had done in their catalogs. Some of Ikea’s model rooms show complete furniture suites under one name, while others are assembled to look like an ensemble.

**Placing Furniture in the Bedroom**

For the housing board, the arrangement of beds in the bedroom had the overall aim of creating universal utility in the room. Although *God bostad* confirmed the norm of using twin beds, the housing board tried to show variations in furnishing the bedroom to ensure enough space and privacy. In six drawings in the 1954 *God bostad*, they placed the twin beds both in a traditional bedroom setting and in a long row or separated. (Fig. 

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55 The first Ikea catalog in 1951 presented two complete suites: *Rita*, “in modern style” available in elm, birch, mahogany, or walnut imitation, or the customer’s color of choice, and *Princess*, 24-27. Ikea started selling dressing tables in 1954, 79, included in a bedroom suite in 1955, 55. In 1959, Bengt Ruda had designed a new suite in oak with teak veneer, *Baltic*, typically with beds, bedside tables, dresser, dressing table with a chair, shown with an upholstered chair, *Novella*. The other suites were called *Pollux*, in teak or mahogany veneer, shown only with beds and shelves on the sides; *Mölle* in teak, assembled from various pieces; and *Birgit*, which was a complete suite in mahogany veneer. All could be bought separately or as a package, 62-63. There was no effort to create a real interior yet, but there might be a radio and a curtain, or some flowers and some decoration on the wall. Apart from such presentations, there were several pages with beds and related items.
5.11) It is important to note that the suggested length for bedroom walls was 310 cm and 410 cm, so that each bed could be two meters and still fit along the same wall. The principal message in God bostad was not to challenge conventional furnishing, but to promote a decent bedroom size that allowed enough space to place beds and other furniture in different ways: “A bedroom for two people shall have a surface of at least 10 square meters and should be designed so that two separate beds could stand along a wall without being below a window.” Even though two beds might not be needed in the room, God bostad emphasized that it is “important to follow the rule, to make sure the room has a good, universal utility.”

Beyond using the bedroom for sleeping, the housing board mentioned the children’s need for a space to play, the schoolchildren’s need for a space to read and write, and perhaps a mother’s need for a space to care for a baby or sew. Regarding the traditional bedroom furnishing of twin beds, God bostad allowed for such an arrangement, preferably in a larger room, for example, 12 square meters. In the 1960 God bostad, the housing board made this dimension a requirement. As an indication of the care with which the norms were developed, another important rule was that bedrooms “shall be placed so that each family member can get to the bedroom without passing another’s

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58 Ibid.
For smaller apartments where people sleep in the living room, *God bostad* pointed out that the bedroom must be accessible directly from the entrance or from both the kitchen and the living room. *God bostad* provided detailed instructions, with drawings indicating wall length and how to fit beds and other types of furniture in different configurations in the bedroom. This reflected and responded to traditionally small rooms and reports of detrimental sleeping conditions.

Taken together, the concern for the bedroom—and the development of a bedroom culture in general—was part of the overall ambition of social improvement. As all players in this period acknowledged, the good dwelling was the most important foundation of a good society. In the 1960s, there would be no more discussion about the parlor; instead, the ideal bedroom was becoming a space to which one could withdraw and find repose.

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61 Ibid., 12.
Part Two, 1960–1965: Rational Consumption and Urbanization

Chapter Six

The Rational Consumer Sets Up Home

Sweden’s growing economy in the 1960s, with its increasing consumer market, saw a wider fostering of the rational consumption that had begun in the postwar period. Advisory literature of the period kept pace with the rise in the marriage rate by ramping up its promotion of quality furnishings for the home. This chapter will consider the further growth of consumer guidance in Sweden toward rational decisions about their purchases. As we will see, the advisory publications, furniture catalogs, and Allt i Hemmet were vocal in disseminating this ideal at a moment of substantial societal change. Whereas the kitchen had been the main focus of the ideal home in the 1950s, in the early 1960s the emphasis was on setting up home in a modern one-bedroom apartment. “It was a time of security and optimism about the future,” Kristina Vestlund recalls, illustrating the great shift in housing, contrasting her own childhood in a modern apartment in suburban Stockholm with the countryside life of her grandmother in Småland, where fetching milk in a pail and using outhouses was the norm.¹

¹ Kristina Vestlund, conversation with author, September 18, 2015.
Rational vs. Irrational Consumption

The message of fostering rational consumption could not have been clearer than in the Bra bohag catalog of 1962–1963, which juxtaposed images of Danish rolls and a cigarette with a smiling couple holding hands by their sofa in the living room. (Figs. 6.1-2) Inga and Anders, the couple in the story, have an “unusually nice home” that is “tasteful and beautiful and personal.” The author wonders how such a lifestyle is possible with their modest income. The home as the center of family life is the reassuring answer in this fictional story: by cutting some of the “unnecessary” costs, they have enough to make the home more pleasant. Forgoing guilty pleasures is shown as the solution, especially for the woman: “You know how I used to glut on pastry and Danish rolls with the afternoon coffee. I don’t do that anymore, and just like that I’ve almost saved up for this sofa. And Anders smokes a couple of cigarettes less a day. He hardly notices the difference.”

The official statistics on household consumption for 1958 form the backdrop of this story. The report showed that Swedes of the era spent nearly the same amount of money on cookies, cakes, and pastry as on furniture, which was only half of what they spent on coffee. The catalog hesitates to add tobacco and hard liquor, but admits that Swedes cigarette purchases constitute almost double the money spent on furniture. In a

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3 Ibid. Swedish text: “Du vet hur jag brukade frossa på bakelser och wienerbröd till eftermiddagskaffet. Det gör jag inte mer, och bara på det har jag väl nästan sparat till den där soffan. Och Anders röker ett par cigaretter mindre om dan. Han märker väl knappt skillnaden.” Also, the Co-op's *Sätta bo* used cigarettes to illustrate the minimal difference in cost was between renting a one- or two-bedroom apartment built in 1960: “An additional expense equivalent of about ten cigarettes a day!” Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin, *Sätta bo* (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1962), 10. Swedish text: “En merutgift som ungefär motsvarar tio cigaretter per dag!”
demanding tone, the Bra bohag catalog asked the readers to “calculate for yourself what your own little bad habit is costing you per week, month, and year.”

Fostering rational consumption for the long term, rather than short-term was the aim. The article continues, “You don’t hesitate to pay hundreds for a fashionable coat or a suit that you don’t even wear out before buying the next garment. But you don’t think that you can afford to buy a new, beautiful table instead of making do with the old one, with its ugly scratches in the French polish!”

Posed in a time when stress appears in discourse as a social woe, the author asks: “Is the health of your nerves not worth what a good bed costs? And, frankly speaking, don’t you deserve a really comfortable easy chair after a hard day?”

The essence of the message was that it pays to buy quality from the beginning, as home furnishings last for years, “yes, maybe even through your whole life.”

In this way, the Bra bohag catalog captured the wholesome tone of the advisory literature, Allt i Hemmet, and the furniture catalogs of the first half of the 1960s, promoting timeless quality as the ideal.

The 1955 Bosättning encouraged regular savings when payday arrived, and had, like Bra bohag, suggested diminishing “tobacco, weekly magazines, entertainment, etc.”

Aware that talk about standards of living usually dealt with “car and villa and fur coat

4 Bra bohag, “Här kan vi ta’t... för så vill vi ha’t,” 48. Swedish text: “Räkna själv efter vad Er egen lilla ovana kostar Er i veckan, månaden och året.”


6 Lena Larsson used a similar comparison with a woman dressed in a fashionable coat for 360 kronor, wearable perhaps for three years—just one season for a person who wanted to keep up with trends—sitting on a table by architect Børge Mogensen for 290 kronor of “unlimited life.” Lena Larsson, “Är möbler dyra?,” Allt i Hemmet 7, no. 7 (1962): 26-27. Swedish text: “Livslångd obegränsad.”

and the trip to Canary Islands,” the final punch in the Bra bohag catalog to promote reasonable consumption was the message of postponing the vacation abroad in favor of “the beautiful living room that you’ve longed for.”

This rhetoric, with its moral undertones juxtaposing rational and irrational consumption, had been prevalent in Sweden since the early twentieth century. It was captured in a well-known comic strip with the girls Spara and Slösa (“Save” and “Waste”), featured in the savings bank's children's magazine Lyckoslanten. Just as the woman in the Bra bohag article had enjoyed her “unnecessary” pastry, the waster, Slösa, was depicted as irrational, impulsive, and hedonistic; her counterpart, Spara, is shown to be thrifty, hard-working, and rational. The two girls embodied an old critique of luxury and the modern ideal of rationalism, with Spara standing for the positive norm and Slösa representing a shocking departure from the way rational consumers should behave.

Compared with other countries, the ideal of rational or “correct” consumption was particularly strong in Sweden. Following Inga, who skips the Danish rolls in favor of saving for a sofa, intellectual historian Peder Aléx argues that Swedish citizens, girls and

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women above all, were trained throughout the twentieth century in the restrictive norms of consumption in school and through information campaigns.\textsuperscript{12}

**Consumer Guidance in a Time of Expanding Markets**

The Swedish economy experienced a boom starting in the 1950s and, along with Switzerland, which had also stayed out of World War II, Sweden was at the top of private consumption in Europe. This made consumer guidance a pressing issue in the 1960s. In Scandinavia, the state took more responsibility for the regulation of consumer issues than in many other countries, including the U.S., where such issues have traditionally been the responsibility of independent organizations.\textsuperscript{13}

In the people’s home of Sweden, consumption became a public issue, which made Sweden a forerunner among the Scandinavian countries. An important initiative was the trade description commission (Varudeklarationsnämnden, VDN) in 1951 with its VDN labeling.\textsuperscript{14} The VDN was formed in response to a demand from consumer organizations and investigations, the product of collaboration that supported the interests of consumers, distributors, and producers with both state and private funding.\textsuperscript{15} The results of such comparative, standardized tests were used in Ikea’s marketing of mattresses, as described in chapter six. In 1957, the state created the National Institute for Consumer Information (Statens institut för konsumentfrågor, called Konsumentinstitutet, the Consumer Institute) as a continuation of the work that the HFI had begun and to distribute product

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Ibid.
\item[15] Berglund, *Tala om kvalitet*, 32.
\end{footnotes}
information and product guidance at a time of expanding consumer markets. To disseminate its research and advice, the institute launched the magazine *Råd & Rön* (*Advice and Results*) in 1958. The guiding principle was objectivity, which meant avoiding value judgments. From the 1950s through the 1970s, the state took great interest in consumer issues and initiated many investigations on how consumer guidance should be organized and allowed to operate.

The Swedish media had criticized state consumer guidance efforts, including the magazine *Råd & Rön*, for being too dull and narrow in scope, and the Consumer Institute was considered problematic as well. It went so far that Birgit Sunesson, who had been in charge of household issues and dwellings at *Allt i Hemmet* until 1962, gathered twenty colleagues in consumer guidance journalism to approach Minister Ulla Lindström to discuss the problem in early 1963. Based on this meeting, the minister initiated a state investigation under the precondition that more effective and broader consumer guidance was needed in a time of expanding markets, to help consumers make wise, reasonable purchases, both for them and for society. *Allt i Hemmet*, which had continually featured consumer guidance since its first issue, followed the minister’s ambition and, in 1963, began a test panel that would assess “how easy a product is to work with, how comfortable, how economical.”

For each succeeding year, it was becoming increasingly difficult “to orientate oneself in the swelling flood of goods,” so the magazine invited

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16 Elsässer, *Att skapa en konsument*, 71-76.
17 Ibid., 123.
18 Ibid., 122-130.
19 Ibid., 126.
20 “Fabrikanter!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 8, no. 8 (1963): 72. Swedish text: “hur lätt den är att arbeta med, hur bekväm, hur ekonomisk den är.” The very first issue of *Allt i Hemmet* in 1956 featured several articles about choosing a chest or upright cabinet freezer and how each worked; this marked the breakthrough in selling household appliances at the time.
producers to send in new products to be tested, discussed, and evaluated by the experts on staff in their testing labs. The aim was “to help consumers choose the right products from among all those available on the market,” especially home furnishings and household appliances.

The idea of pointing readers to “the good commodity” was firmly rooted in the ideal of reasonable consumption, and other publications followed this approach. In 1964, an updated Råd & Rön appeared, featuring broader content authored by a larger pool of contributors. The 1965 Bosättning focused more on consumer guidance and VDN labels than the previous edition from a decade earlier.

A breadbox is an illustrative example from the first assessment of Allt i Hemmet’s test panel. Welcoming the new possibilities of plastics, the test panel assessed a plastic breadbox using all the rational arguments of the time: light, practical, cheap, and easy to clean. In particular, they praised the producer, Skånska Ättiksfabriken in Perstorp, for having consulted the Swedish Institute for Standards (SIS), the Consumer Institute, and the Bread Institute. Accordingly, the breadbox was redesigned to fit the pantry in a standard Swedish kitchen, which could fit two such boxes if necessary. Indicative of the collaborative, educational spirit of the time, the Bread Institute was founded in 1957 by

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22 Ibid., 72. Swedish text: “För att hjälpa konsumenteran att välja rätt bland varorna på marknaden . . .”
23 Elsässer, Att skapa en konsument, 140. Råd & Rön still exists.
24 Birgitta Ek, “Vi provar för Er,” Allt i Hemmet 9, no. 1 (1964): 47. They tested 16 new products on the market, such as mattress protection, a tool for easy cleaning of Venetian blinds, and special hooks to hang plastic draperies. The test panel took offense at a gratin dish of stainless steel, a square-shaped casserole, and a rolling-pin, which seven people at the Consumer Institute had tested with several unfavorable results for the magazine. Ibid., 45-48, 58-59.
authorities, trade, and bread producers, with the mission to promote people’s health through good, inexpensive food, such as bread.\textsuperscript{25}

The consideration of a breadbox in this exercise symbolized the care now being taken to evaluate the smallest detail in the people’s home. In addition, it revealed how widespread this effort had become, through the collaboration of authorities, producers, and organizations, in a typical corporatist approach to determine the optimal design for everyday life. While the magazine \textit{Råd & Rön} had been founded specifically for consumer guidance, the popular magazine \textit{Allt i Hemmet} also played an important role in disseminating these efforts to readers who had not sought this type of information specifically.

Whereas \textit{Råd & Rön}, Swedish television, and the VDN declarations sought objectivity in their consumer guidance, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} took the liberty of giving value judgments on comfort.\textsuperscript{26} They included a wooden safari-type easy chair with leather seating in the first survey of products. Acknowledging modern Swedish furniture to be “good, functional, honest, handsome,” the magazine also expressed its criticism of the “fairly monotonous, similar-looking supply.” Therefore, the test team was happy to see something new in the easy chair. The team thought it was appropriately beautiful and inexpensive; while some felt uncomfortable in the chair, it worked well for the shorter team members. It was a useful experience, the magazine concluded, “realizing once again: We are so different, we sit so differently, a good chair may not be the same for a

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[26] Elsässer, \textit{Att skapa en konsument}, 79-80, 99-100, 120, 146.
\end{itemize}
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tall or short person. Women sit in one way, men in another, old people have different requirements for a comfortable chair than the young, and so on.”27 This explains why the VDN’s informative labels placed on Swedish consumer goods only included what was measureable. Ikea took the opportunity to advertise in Allt i Hemmet, focusing on furniture with VDN labels and while also noting that Ikea had its own product testing department.28

More Marriages, More Advisory Publications

Since the end of World War II, the number of Swedish marriages peaked in the 1960s, when the baby boomers began to set up home. Most of these new couples were younger than in past generations.29 As a result, the number of publications aiming to foster rational consumers increased significantly. Allt i Hemmet reflected the moment by issuing a 1962 supplement called “We are getting married!” that was specifically devoted to furnishing a small apartment within the state setting-up-home loan of 4,000 kronor.30

28 “Ikea” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 8, no. 3 (1963): 71.
29 From 50,149 couples in 1960 to 61,101 couples in 1966, a bit below the top year 1944 with its 64,627 marriages, but still a record high apart from 1944, an exceptional year when widows’ pensions were scheduled to be abolished the following year and 108,919 couples got married in order to be eligible for the benefit. The number of babies born in 1964–1966 was a record high in the postwar period, matched only when these earlier children had babies themselves in the early 1990s. The number of marriages dropped in 1967 to 56,561 and, until 1973, fewer and fewer people married. Not until 2006 did the number of married couples rise above 50,000 again. “Befolkningsutveckling – födda, döda, in- och utvandring samt giftermål och skilsmässor 1749–2019,” Statistics Sweden, accessed March 29, 2020, https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/tabell-och-diagram/helarstatistik--riket/befolkningsutveckling-fodda-doda-in-och-utvandring-gifta-skilda/; Birgitta Ek and Lena Larsson, “Vi gifter oss!,” supplement to Allt i Hemmet 7, no. 11 (1962): 1.
30 Ek and Larsson, “Vi gifter oss!,” supplement to Allt i Hemmet 7, no. 11 (1962). In the 1950s, Allt i
For the first time, the 1962 Ikea catalog and the 1961–1962 Bra bohag catalog featured suggestions for how newlyweds could furnish a one-bedroom apartment.\textsuperscript{31} In addition, Ikea published pamphlets with summaries of the state setting-up-home loans to encourage young couples to apply for them, with the assumption that they would buy their furniture from Ikea.\textsuperscript{32} Other advisory publications also informed readers about the

\textit{Hemmet} had published a few articles targeting young couples setting up home: Lena Larsson, “Äntligen blev det vår tur!,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 1, no. 6 (1956): 4-6, including information on how to apply for the setting-up-home loan of 3,000 kr. In December 1957, the magazine invited participation in a competition similar to the one on the family kitchen, with cutout furniture and a plan of a one-bedroom apartment; here, the contest called for imagined furnishings for a new home costing 5,000 kr. The apartment was to be furnished for a newlywed couple; the husband, a school teacher, 27 years old, has evening work at home and his wife is a nurse, 24 years old, who desires a baby and wants to quit working as soon as possible. “Sätt bo för 5000:-,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 2, no. 12 (1957): 19-22, 82-83. Thousands of replies were received, nearly all good, according to the magazine, which stated that many fell out because they had used “cheap catalog and mail-order furniture of doubtful quality.” This probably included Ikea furniture, as it was not until 1964 the company reached a breakthrough in terms of quality; see chapter ten. Another reason entries were not considered for an award was that contestants had included a dining table in the living room at the expense of a workplace for the teacher. The third reason was that many placed large groups diagonally in the living room. Lena Larsson, “Tusentals svar – nästan alla bra!,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 3, no. 3 (1958): 48-51. In the same issue, there was a comprehensive article on setting up home, including furniture, china, with information on loans, etc.: Marianne Fredriksson and Lena Larsson, “Till er som sätter bo i vår,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 3, no. 3 (1958): 30-38. There was no such comprehensive feature in 1959, but an article on setting up home with cheap furniture of whitewood that the couple could paint themselves, such as stick-back chairs, bought not in the furniture store but in the so-called sloyd shop. Marianne Fredriksson, text; Lena Larsson, selection and interiors, “Köp trävitt – måla själv,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 4, no. 8 (1959): 34-41. In 1960, Marianne Fredriksson wrote the story of a couple with a baby who set up their household in a rented room. She continued to follow the couple from their first date to the arrival of an unplanned baby, and she lost no opportunity to emphasize their consumer choices. As if they had read \textit{Bosättning} from 1955—or \textit{Allt i Hemmet} for that matter—the couple had “beautiful rag rugs,” a space-saving folding table, and a practical small table on wheels along with things they had made themselves and a few inherited pieces. Since the couple had little space, “there were no impulse purchases,” but they had time to think: “They even turned it into a sport to learn about the different alternatives on the market—before they decided to buy something.” Marianne Fredriksson, “Sätta bo utan lägenhet,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 5, no. 1 (1960): 26-33. Swedish text: “På det sättet blev det alltså inga impulsköp. De hade ju också tid att välja och vraka, fundera och väga för och emot. De gjorde det rentav till en sport att ha tagit reda på marknadens olika alternativ – innan de beslutade sig för en bestämd sak.”


state setting-up-home loan, savings accounts, Co-op credits, and other forms of loans based on savings.\(^{33}\)

To further disseminate ideas on ideal home furnishings, Bra bohag published the 1963 book *Bo bättre, trivas mera* (*Live Better, Feel More at Home*), with Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin as a member of the editorial board. She had written the Co-op book *Vårt hem* in 1956, which came in a new version, *Sätta bo* (*To Set Up Home*), in 1962. The network of experts in Sweden was small, and she had been the director of the study section of the SSF with a background as a home economics teacher.\(^{34}\) *Sätta bo* was a success, with five editions and 96,000 copies printed between 1962 and 1971, including a special edition for the public service broadcaster Swedish Radio.\(^{35}\)


\(^{34}\) Caption with image of the teacher and miniature furniture to be used in schools, from *Form* no. 3-4 (1959) in Göran Greider, “Kritiken av folkhemmet,” in *Hem*, ed. Carl Heideken (Stockholm: Stockholms stads museum, 1994), 57.

\(^{35}\) The editions are the same, with just minor differences such as a few images and updated information on VDN and wall-to-wall carpeting. A bigger difference was the changing attitude toward mail-order companies, see further in the section on Ikea’s breakthrough. For the third edition in 1965, the foreword was written not by the author, but by Turid Ström, who was the Co-op’s chief of consumer politics and later a member of parliament for the Social Democrats. The book had special editions, such as Swedish Radio’s agreement with the publisher Rabén & Sjögren in 1963, *Sätta bo: Handbok till radions heminredningsserie*, which has “Sveriges Radio” printed on the front cover and on the back “SVERIGES RADIO LTK.” LTK was the co-operative farmer’s movement’s publishing house for study circles and correspondence courses, Lantbrukarnas Tidskriftskatalogs Korrespondensskola, which meant that the radio’s edition was used within the vast farmer’s movement. For this purpose, LTK published a 30-page study plan for ten meetings of the study circle, but it could also be used by those who studied by themselves and sent in their responses, according to the introduction. In the back, there is a list of relevant books, films, and slideshows produced by the Co-op, SSF, VDN, the savings bank, Sol-film (related to the farmer’s movement), etc. In short, a typical example of the involvement by different organizations in making people discuss and learn in study circles. Birgitta Montan, *Sätta bo: Studieplan* (Stockholm: LTK, 1964). Another special edition includes the following at the beginning: “This book is a wedding present from the Co-op Stockholm” (Swedish text: “Denna bok är en bröllopspresent från Konsum Stockholm”), as in a copy in the library of the Nordic Museum in Stockholm. Swedish Radio had also had previous series with consumer guidance, also used by study circles, *Bra vara till vardags* (Stockholm: Radiotjänst in collaboration with Swedish Society of Crafts, and Design, 1948), including a chapter on beds by Erik Berglund, pots and pans by Marit Neymark,
complement to the state setting-up-home loan, the brochure *Bosättning* (*Setting-Up-Home*) came in a new edition in 1965, once again published by the SSF in collaboration with the central bank of Sweden. There were also a number of other publications on the subject, such as a third edition of Lena Larsson’s and Elias Svedberg’s *Heminredning* in 1965.

The 1965 edition of *Bosättning* encouraged readers to educate themselves in how to set up home through books, newspapers, exhibitions, study circles, radio, and television, with the key message: “Knowledge is fun and one can get it many ways.”

*Allt i Hemmet*, the Co-op, and Bra bohag suggested the same systematic approach for young couples spending time in the housing line. As noted in chapter two, the tradition of study circles was strong in corporatist Sweden, involving people both in the cities and in the countryside who gathered to study and inform themselves of an issue of current importance. With consumer guidance a pressing question of the time, new study circles on furnishing the home developed in the 1960s. Both the cooperative consumer...
movement, linked to the worker’s movement, and the publishing house of the cooperative farmer’s movement published advisory literature with accompanying plans for study circles on practical and pleasant household design.\(^{38}\)

The Co-op continued their mission to educate consumers by widely disseminating their new setting-up-home book. *Sätta bo* was a title intended for young people who were about to get married; seen through a bookshelf, the cover featured a young couple where the woman happily hugs a man, who is looking up as if anticipating a bright future. (Fig. 6.3) The Co-op in Stockholm, with its 220,000 member households, sent *Sätta bo* as a wedding present to all couples getting married in Stockholm as a promotion for the benefits of being a Co-op member. The organizations continued to state its ideological mission of co-operative ownership rather than capitalism: “To be a consumer in the 60s is difficult. The ones who choose to shop at Konsum, however, know that no one will make

\(^{38}\) See above and Eva Ralf, *Möbler och inredning* (Stockholm: LTK, 1958, 1960). I found the 1960 edition and study plan with my mother’s notes about participating women and dates of the five meetings they had in their study circle in Äsgarn, spring 1964. The author Eva Ralf had written the official setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning* (1955) with Ingeborg Warn Bugge. Other publications were Katja Waldén, *Rikare vardag* (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1960); Catarina Nordström and Katja Waldén, *Rikare vardag: Studiehandledning* (Stockholm: KF, Gruppverksamheten, 1960). This book and its study plan were a collaboration between the homemaker department of the Co-op and the home and family department of the publishing house, which was owned by the Co-op; Gingen Jonson, *Inne - en bok med tips för händigt folk* (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1966); Gingen Jonson, *Inne - en bok med tips för händigt folk: Handledning* (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1966). This book was also part of the Co-op, the so-called *Vi-skolan*, education linked to their magazine *Vi*. Also Ica-förlaget, which published the magazine *Hem & frid*, a competitor with *Allt i Hemmet’s* publications: Tord Kempe, *Välja heminredning* (Västerås: Ica-förlaget, 1962, revised edition 1969) and on furnishings for the elderly and children: Barbro Wiström, Iwan Näslund, and Ann-Marie Lagercrantz, *Möblera rätt: Möbleringsförslag, de äldres bohag, barnens miljö* (Västerås: Ica-förlaget, 1961). The setting-up-home consultant in Stockholm had also written a book similar to the others: Gunnel Sandegård, *Utrusta ditt hem* (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Aldus/Bonniers, 1966). In addition, there were publications on how to plan a kitchen, what kinds of utensils one needs in the kitchen and for cleaning, etc, published by the Consumer Institute. Going through material in the Royal Library, I was surprised to find the study plan called My Room, also by Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin, which targeted young people in youth organizations to create a project to make their own room more pleasant and comfortable—and I realized that I had participated in such a project over a couple of summers as a young teen in my youth organization Vi Unga. The mission to make both young people and adults aware of how to plan and set up home was quite thorough in Sweden! Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin, *Mitt rum: Handledning* (Stockholm: Riksförbundet Sveriges 4H and Förbundet Hem och Ungdom, 1961).
a profit at their expense.”39 They also took a chance by mentioning that they had opened Obs!, the first discount store in Stockholm. Ikea had not yet opened a store in Stockholm, and the Co-op and its Obs! and Domus stores were to become Ingvar Kamprad’s key competitors. By the early 1960s, commercial enterprises such as Ikea had also developed their own consumer advice.

**Consumer Education Starts with the Young**

In addition to setting-up-home publications, study circles, and radio programs, the values of reasonable consumption, economy, and knowledge about goods had been instilled in Swedish schoolgirls in home economics classes throughout the twentieth century. Cleanliness, thrift, and nutrition were repeated values in the curricula, as Aléx points out in his survey of education in home economics.40 Arguments for home economics in 1927 included how the subject fostered an orderly economy within the family and helped pupils stand up against temptations and love of pleasure for its own sake. Indirectly, the authors also believed such knowledge could contribute to a happier life at home.41

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39 Loose leaf inserted in *Sätta bo* (1965). Swedish text: “Att vara konsument på 60-talet är svårt. Den som väljer att handla i Konsum vet dock alltid att ingen gör sig vinst på hans eller hennes bekostnad.” In line with the ideal of rational consumption and thrift, Swedish setting-up-home publications focus on the couple and not the bride, and there are no bridal advertisements in for example *Allt i Hemmet*, or pink appliances targeting women, as discussed in, for example, Sparke, *As Long as It’s Pink*, 194-98; Barbara Penner, “Rehearsing domesticity: Postwar Pocono honeymoon resorts,” in Negotiating Domesticity: *Spatial productions of gender in modern architecture*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Gülsüm Baydar (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 103-20.


41 Ibid., 83-84, referring to Gertrud Bergström and Ingeborg Walin, *Hushållsgöromål som läroämne: Handbok vid undervisning i hushållsgöromål inom olika skolformer* (Stockholm, 1927). They basically followed the 1919 curriculum, according to Aléx.
The ideal of encouraging reasonable consumption has therefore had a long tradition in Sweden that predates the postwar era. Even closer to the setting-up-home publications of the early 1960s were the goals of the 1955 home economics curriculum, which by then was compulsory for boys and girls in junior high school. The subject sought to foster rational work methods, reasonable economy, and hygiene, both in the home and personally. On a concrete level, the curricula proposed the same exercise as was appearing in many of the setting-up-home publications; this included making a functional furnishing proposal for a well-planned dwelling, budgeting, and well-considered uses of purchasing options, cash or credit. Books on home economics from 1962 include the same images of different qualities of beds as the advisory literature, the same ideas on a rationally planned kitchen and work positions, the same tools you need for cooking and cleaning, and the correct measurements of tables.42

The only areas not included in the advisory publications of the 1950s and 1960s were nutrition and the proper selection and preparation of food, which was an equally important part of home economics. While these lessons were designed for both boys and girls, practical education in household work remained a subject only taught to girls.43 By 1962, the entire curriculum included boys and girls, underscoring at last the role of home

42 Marta Nilsson and Eira Eriksson, *Hemkunskap för grundskolan årskurs 7 med receptsamling* (Stockholm: Magn. Bergvalls förlag, 1962), 7-23; *Hemkunskap för ungdom* (Stockholm: Sparfrämjandets förlag, 1962). In a pocket in the back, this book includes floor plans and cutout furniture so as to plan a home, including budget sheets.
43 Aléx, *Konsumera rätt – ett svenskt ideal*, 86. Home economics was compulsory in realskolan, junior high school preparing for higher studies, from the fall semester 1953. *Folkskolan*, the compulsory seven-year school for all, also received a new curriculum in 1955 with similar content, including what characterizes a functional and pleasant dwelling, although boys studied only the theoretical aspect of home economics. Ibid., 87, 92-93.
economics education as the basis for training informed consumers. The craft-oriented school subject sloyd had a similar mission, and the new 1962 curriculum applied its concepts when helping create knowledgeable consumers who could be aware of the different qualities of textiles and how to care for them. In this way, the foundation for spreading the values of rationality, functionality, hygiene, and reasonable consumption was already laid in school and furthered by *Allt i Hemmet* and the other publications for young people about to set up home.

**The Floor Plan**

The importance of measurements in terms of dwellings and furnishings grew in the early 1960s. If kitchens, beds, and other pieces of furniture were the focus of the 1950s, it was the plan of the rooms themselves that captured researchers’ attention in the early 1960s. Writing in *Allt i Hemmet*, Sunesson captured the issue at stake: “But what about dwellings? How does it help with kitchen interiors and furniture on a human scale, when individual rooms do not support furniture and people?”

Reporting from an exhibition on the measurements of the dwelling in 1960, the magazine was quick to popularize the research by the National Board of Building Research (Statens nämnd för

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44 Ibid., 88. The preparatory work was presented in 1961 and the new curriculum established in 1962, at the same time as the whole Swedish school system changed into a common *grundskola*, a compulsory education of nine years for everybody instead of a seven-year folk school for all and preparatory school for others continuing to high school.
byggnadsforskning) presented in an exhibition, a report, and an instruction film. The magazine and the exhibition brochure used the same illustrations to make the point that the measurements of a room, not just the number of square meters, were crucial to creating a good dwelling suited to human scale. Sunesson claimed that the necessary width of an entrance hall should be 1.4 meters in order to offer enough space to comfortably put on your coat and shoes, and that there must be at least 1.1 meters of free space in front of the stove, so as not to bump into the opposite wall when checking a cake in the oven. These were details that a state-run agency had determined were essential for creating good dwellings as the national right of its citizens.

The bedroom continued to attract attention, and Sunesson showed two plans, both measuring 12 square meters. One was so rectangular that it could not fit two beds side by side and leave enough space for a person to pass; the other had proportions that enabled a traditional master bedroom to be furnished with two twin beds perpendicular to the wall. (Fig. 6.5) The Co-op’s Sätta bo featured a small bedroom in which the newlywed couple must place their beds in a row along the bedroom wall, as they could not fit otherwise. Following this research, the 1960 God bostad required a minimum of 12 square meters to allow for better usability.

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47 Svensk Byggtjänst, Bostadens mått (Stockholm: Svensk Byggtjänst, 1960) and Sunesson, “Bra bostad ger oss bättre plats,” 58. According to the article, architect John Sjöström had conducted research of the rooms and furniture.

48 Sunesson, “Bra bostad ger oss bättre plats,” 58. These measurements were also in God bostad (1960), 30, and (1954), 8.

49 Sunesson, “Bra bostad ger oss bättre plats,” 58.

50 Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962), 99, 101. They had Telax beds from the Co-op made of plaited rubber bands, first introduced in the 1950s.

51 Kungl. Bostadssstyrelsen, God bostad (1960). In God bostad (1954) it was desireable, 12. Both the Co-op and Bra bohag indicate the minimum measurement of 70 cm next to the bed in order to have enough space for making the bed and cleaning, a measurement also featured in the drawings of God bostad 1960 and
The housing board took into consideration the common ways of furnishing a bedroom for a couple. Instead of trying to change habits, it accommodated the normative practice. The conventional way of furnishing, however, was just one of several options in the drawings of God bostad and in the advisory literature of the time. The Co-op, Bra bohag, and Heminredning featured bedroom plans comparing the traditional twin bed placement to others in an angle, in a row along the wall, or separated in opposite corners, highlighting in a practical way that these alternatives allow for more free space and more activities, such as work, infant care, and dressing in a single space. Although Bra bohag’s Bo bättre, trivas mera acknowledged that the conventional twin bed placement “is more tempting for intimacy and familiarity,” the author in a matter-of-fact manner argued for the space-saving advantages of alternative solutions.52

Strengthening their emphasis on floor plans, the 1960 God bostad emphasized that the project manager “must assure that the rooms achieve a good and universal utility by making plans for furnishings.”53 Investigations had made it clear that most families had a dining set and a seating group, which led the 1960 God bostad to include, for the first time, drawings of such furniture and how much space they required in a room. The 1954 God bostad suggested 360 cm as a minimum width for a living room, a seemingly

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53 Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad 1960, 8-9. Swedish text: “Projektören måste genom att göra upp möbleringsplaner förvissa sig om att rummen får en god och allmäninglig användbarhet.” This statement belonged to one of the five points for what makes a “good dwelling”: “A good dwelling shall be effectively planned.” Swedish text: “En god bostad skall vara effektivt planerad.”
random measurement until one read the drawings in the 1960 edition. (Fig. 6.6) There, the illustration reveals a clear plan for fitting a table and chairs, expandable to fit eight people, as well as a sofa, coffee table, and two armchairs in a typical rectangular living room. The sofa fits perfectly next to the door as one enters the room, and the whole long wall to the right is left for what God bostad required: “There must also be space for storage furniture, radio/gramophone, and TV.”54 The measurement of 360 cm not only corresponded to the usability of the living room, however. It was also the measurement of precast concrete panels in the rationalized construction of the space. In 1954, the HSB had introduced industrialized construction with prefabricated concrete slabs lifted by cranes instead of brick walls built by hand.55

The emphasis on rationalization and spatial research meant that almost everything could be measured and developed as a standard. To further the findings of such research, Allt i Hemmet offered a special supplement in 1961 with “the most important measurements” and “what makes a good dwelling,” including a whole spread with similar drawings, as in God bostad and the exhibition brochure on the measurements of the dwelling. This was also a kind of consumer guidance, presented as “the latest finds within housing research,” as the readers learned what they might demand of a new apartment.56

The research continued, and the 1964 version of God bostad even included a

54 Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad 1960, 23. Swedish text: “Dessutom måste plats finnas för förvaringsmöbler, radiogrammofon och TV.” God bostad 1954 had only included drawings of the necessary measurements to fit a kitchen table with three or five seats, the kitchen cupboards, and examples of how beds could be placed differently depending on the length of the walls. Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1954), 8, 9, 11, 13.
supplement with small drawings of different types of furniture and how much space was needed around them, from piano and TV to twin beds, seating groups, and dining tables with seating for eight. (Fig. 6.7) Another new feature showed how much space a person needed to pass between a piece of furniture and a wall, such as the space required to pull out a drawer—everything to have the architects design apartments that gave enough space for their inhabitants.57 (Fig. 6.8)

Educating consumers also meant activating them. The 1961 Allt i Hemmet supplement encouraged people to grab the tape measure, paper, and pen to see if the apartment they were considering was up to standard. The supplement, however, also listed exterior aspects such as communications, shops, playgrounds, and greenery—and even personal feelings—to consider before making the final decision on whether or not to take an apartment.58 In this way, the magazine also acknowledged that there were values that could not be measured and calculated with a tape measure, even though those measurements were central to the decision-making process.

Allt i Hemmet was not alone. There was a general drive to encourage young people to be educated consumers, aware of measurements and plans based on the findings in God bostad and housing research. The Co-op and Bra bohag encouraged people to learn how to read a plan and make a drawing of how the furniture would be placed. Their books also included similar drawings, as seen in God bostad and Allt i Hemmet, of how

57 Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1964), 51-53. The drawings came from information sheets no. 1962:7 and 1962:35 from the National Board of Building Research (Statens Nämnd för Byggnadsforskning). Wärn Bugge and Ralf, eds., Bosättning (1955), 1. Birgit Sunesson included the example that a person needs space not for only moving back and forth in rooms, but also for bending and stretching, such as pulling out a cabinet drawer. Sunesson, “Bra bostad ger oss bättre plats,” 58.
much space was needed around beds and dining tables. In addition, since 1955, the Ikea catalog had included a grid plan and encouraged customers to plan their home.

The Co-op also had a special brochure where young couples could cut out pieces of furniture and place them on a grid plan in a brochure called “reflect, plan, furnish,” much as school home economics courses did. (Figs. 6.9-10) The cover of the brochure featured a young couple looking at each other in profile. Inside were small drawings of tables, chairs, sofas, cabinets, and beds that they could cut out and place on the centimeter grid plan while planning their home. Some specific examples of furniture were illustrated and, corresponding to Henrikson-Abelin’s advice in Sätta bo, the upholstered sofas and armchairs were straight so that they could be easily protected with a practical cotton cover; all had visible wooden legs, making it easy to clean the floor beneath.

To further instill the reliability and seriousness of the Co-op and the importance of the project of setting up home, the brochure included information on financing and encouraged the reader to first make the plan with furniture cutouts. The next step was to visit a Möbelkonsum store to discuss the plan with professional advisors. The brochure presented experts, including Mrs. Vera Diurson, inspiringly presented as “well-known

60 Fundera, planera, möblera: möbleringsplan från Möbelkonsum (Stockholm: Möbelkonsum, 1964). Three shops were indicated on this particular version found in the Royal Library: Ringvägen 98, Fleminggatan 43 and Odengatan 56 in Stockholm. There are most likely other editions of this brochure where the addresses Möbelkonsum shops in other places are indicated. The Co-op also published another discussion and work material in Sätta bo, which had furniture to cut out and an enlarged plan of a two-bedroom apartment to test furnishings. This 14-page brochure could also be used in a course, as the first page suggests four points: 1. Show the slideshow, 2. Form small discussion groups, 3. Discuss the tasks in the brochure, 4. Make a mockup furnishing with the help of the plan and the furniture models. Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin, Vi möblerar: Ett diskussions- och arbetsmaterial (Stockholm: Konsumentinformationen KF, n.d.).
since her time as director at the State Consumer Institute, now advisor of home textiles at Möbelkonsum.” The Co-op publications indicated that the organization sought to convey one solution to the project of setting up home, a well-meaning but normative message of what was the most suitable home furnishings based in their tradition of educating reasonable consumers.

**Investigating and Measuring Storage Needs**

The scientific approach and the attention to practical details in developing the standard kitchen and the standard measurements of beds and tables continued with storage needs in the home. Such investigations led the 1960 *God bostad* to point out that there must be space for storage furniture, radio/gramophone, and TV in the living room. As we saw in literature produced in the 1950s, bookshelves combined with cupboards, a writing surface, and sometimes a place for the TV set was becoming common. Many aspects of domestic life were the subject of research, indeed, but the results were now widely disseminated and popularized through *Allt i Hemmet* and other advisory publications, further emphasizing the focus on consumer guidance at the time. Having started with beds, Erik Berglund and Sten Engdal at the SSF conducted a similarly exhaustive and influential investigation of domestic storage furniture published in 1960, *Skåp* (Cabinets). This case study is illustrative of the time.

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62 Ibid., n.p. Swedish text: “Fru Vera Diurson är bl.a. välkänd från sin tid som byråchef på Statens Institut för Konsumentfrågor. Arbetar nu som hemtextilkonsulent åt Möbelkonsum.” The other expert presented was Ulla Rosenius, an interior designer who would provide personal advice on furnishing a new home and how it could be financed.

The growing consumer society meant an increase in material possessions, which made finding optimal storage furniture a pressing concern. The aim of research at this time was to determine the ideal dimensions and internal fittings of cupboards used for storing the many objects now found in a home: clothing, linen, china and cutlery, accessories for ironing, sewing and the maintenance of clothing, books and periodicals, papers and documents, music and gramophone records, toys, spare bedding, souvenirs, seasonal ornaments, and hobby articles such as artist and handicraft materials, stamp collections, photo equipment, games, sports equipment and awards, and so on.

The report *Skåp* contains tables with measurements of all the television sets, radios, tape recorders, and record players on the market in 1959, with the number of sets at different length, height, and depth, in order to determine the necessary size of a storage unit for that object. A table in the report is provided with suggestions for a new, standardized method for testing the load capacity of bookshelves, thus determining how greatly a shelf bends after six weeks of holding a given weight of books; this was used to determine the norms for the VDN declaration. Another table combines all the flatware, china, glasses, and other utensils in a service for twelve people, with number, diameter, and height, while another table accounts for the weight of such items, including linen, books per meter, records per decimeter, and typing paper. There are tables of clothes, including the average wardrobe for a man, a woman, and children aged 3–5 years and 7–10 years, including every type of garment, number, measurements, and an indication of
whether it should be stored in the entrance hall, hung in a closet, folded in a drawer or on a shelf, or stored for the season in the attic or basement.\(^{64}\)

An attention to detail is also seen in the drawings of how much space flatware for twelve people required, with suggested measurements of such storage units and examples of glass and china placed on different sizes of shelves. In an effort to inspire designers, Axel Larsson’s new cupboard *Signum* for Bra bohag could be seen as a direct borrowing from *Skåp*, with images and text explaining how much china, glass, flatware, and other utensils could fit in the cupboard.\(^{65}\) (Figs. 6.11-12) Having measured and tested a variety of items—underwear, writing paper, sewing notions, and china—Berglund and Engdal derived three useful measurements for shelves and drawers.\(^{66}\) (Fig. 6.13) In this way, they undertook the study with multifunctionality in mind while limiting the number of measurements for recommendations to producers and furniture designers.\(^{67}\)

The drawing of a person pulling out a drawer and the necessary space for that movement was based on this investigation. (See fig. 6.8) Berglund and Engdal took into consideration reach, eye level, working and placement height, and space requirements in front of the piece of furniture; they then tested all the aspects with people to determine the appropriate measurements.\(^{68}\) As they compiled their findings, they demonstrated the most applicable dimensions and suggested a modular series of a basic set of shelves, cupboards, and drawers that would work for the various things in a home, with

\(^{64}\) Erik Berglund, *Skåp: redovisning av praktiska krav på bostadens förvaringsmöbler* (Stockholm: Svenska slöjdföreningen, 1960), 118-131, 134. As the Swedish National Institute for Consumer Information had already published investigations on food storage, kitchen equipment, cleaning materials, etc., such items were not included in this investigation.


\(^{66}\) Berglund, *Skåp*, 40, 44, 73.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 13.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 138.
measurements adjusted to fit, for example, the table height recommended by the SSF, and
the standard ceiling height of an apartment, so that everything could fit together. Their
conclusion was that it would be better to combine storage spaces into a modular system
according to individual needs and to efficiently use the wall space up to the ceiling, rather
than having multiple pieces of furniture crowding the space.69

The investigation of domestic storage furniture demonstrates how official
institutions as well as commercial enterprises collaborated to spread its findings, making
such wall-covering units in the living room the most sold furniture type.70 Berglund and
Engdal’s proposal of most applicable dimensions included cupboards, drawers, and
shelves that were 60 or 100 cm wide, which added up to exactly the three meters that God
bostad then established as the norm. Indeed, the 1964 God bostad specified that
cupboards required 300 cm of wall space, in addition to making the previous
recommendation of 360 cm as width of the living room into a minimum and preferably
wider requirement.71 As we have observed in the drawing from the 1960 God bostad, this
measurement would fit the seating group as well as the storage unit on the opposite wall,
where the TV set could also have its place. (See fig. 6.6)

69 Ibid., 78-101.
70 Wickman, “Byggbart, utbyttbart, flyttbart,” 336-37. The advisory publications recommended the 140-
page report Skäp to consumers: Bra bohag, Bra bohag 1961-62, 7; Rebecka Tarschys and Hedvig Tarschys-
Block, “Köpa möbler,” in Bo bättre, trivas mera en handbok utgiven av Bra bohag, ed. Ulf Hård af
Segerstad, Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin, Sven Staaf (n.p.: Bra bohag, 1963), 60-61; M.S., “Ordning bland
skåpen,” Allt i Hemmet 5, no. 5 (1960): 138; and the Co-op highlights the importance of research and
mentions the report, but recommends another SSF book called Möbelråd, Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo
(1962), 22.
include furniture types but mentions the careful planning of the room, stating that a minimum breadth could
be 360 cm, or even 340, thus not making it a requirement, as in 1964. Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad
(1954), 10.
The correlation between the measurements in the apartments and the recommendations for storage units was clear. In 1960, Berglund and Engdal designed a system, called Contenta, that the setting-up-home publications all promoted. Although built-in storage became more common in modern apartments across Europe and the United States, Berglund and Engdal acknowledged that all individual needs could not be met by such facilities and designed Contenta using all the “right” measurements. The official setting-up-home brochure Bosättning followed Berglund and Engdal in advising consumers to buy sections of a modular storage series that could be augmented, as “all together a whole wall of storage can give great coziness to a room.”

The couple setting up home in the Co-op’s Sätta bo, Inger and Lasse, served as a model couple of educated consumers. They considered it “immensely irritating not to have enough storage space” and spent quite a lot of money buying units from the Contenta series for the living room, bedroom, and entrance hall. (Fig. 6.14) They chose Contenta, as it had “received very high marks” and featured “beautiful wooden surfaces, easily sliding drawers and practical measurements.” Indeed, two piles of perfectly folded men’s shirts could fit in the drawer of the dresser.

Allt i Hemmet promoted the investigation’s report Skåp as well as Contenta and featured a ten-page article detailing the contents of a household with a comparison of the

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72 Krantz-Jensen, Bosättning (1965), 34-35. Swedish text: “Sammanförs delarna sedan till en hel förvaringsvägg kan de ge stor trivsel åt ett rum.”
ten most popular storage series, including *Contenta*. The magazine also highlighted a cheap and an expensive alternative, where the cheap option embraced a do-it-yourself spirit with simple, unpainted warehouse shelves mounted on backing and with doors so as to make it into a unit. Although promoting inexpensive ways to customize, the magazine acknowledged that warehouse shelves might not suit older homes with chandeliers and oriental carpets. The images of storage walls include books, TV sets, records, radios, cameras, decorative objects in ceramics, and were similar to those used in the *Skåp* report.

The Bra bohag catalogs also promoted such walls as a “natural place for the TV set and generous storage space for everything relating to hobbies and delightful comfy evenings at home,” under the heading “We enjoy an evening at home.” (Fig. 6.15) The TV came to play an increasing role as the “house altar,” a focal point for the shelving system, which was something that Fredriksson had feared as early as 1957. Bra bohag’s *Bo bättre, trivas mera* spoke of the current need for space for other things than books, such as TV, records, and “souvenirs, beautiful bowls, and the family portraits that used to

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77 Bra bohag, *Bra bohag 1959-60*, 19. Swedish text: “Vi har fått en naturlig plats för TV och vi har generösa förvaringsutrymmen för allt som har med hobby och härligt sköna hemmakvällar att göra.” Heading: “Vi två har hemmakväll.” The storage unit was *Öresund*, designed by Danish architect Børge Mogensen and launched in the 1958 catalog, 9, further expanded in the 1961–62 catalog, 33. *Öresund* is the sound between Denmark and Sweden. The storage unit *Öresund* is also featured in the Taschen book on the 1960s, including similar units by Conran in the UK and from Germany, indicating its presence in other countries. Charlotte and Peter Fiell, eds., *60s Decorative Art* (Köln: Taschen, 2013), 209, 230, 246. There were also other shelving systems promoted by Bra bohag, such as *Variett* by Bertil Fridhagen for Bodafors, in the 1962–63 catalog, 15.
be placed on the writing-desk.” As this shows, the need to display personal objects had not disappeared in rationally planned storage systems.

One item is strikingly different in the Ikea catalog of the time: the cocktail cabinet. No other publication mentioned or featured such a cabinet, whereas, for its “new, exclusive series” Varié in 1961, Ikea highlighted the spacious cocktail cabinet with its mirror-wall, along with another cocktail cabinet with “striking automatic lighting that turns on when the doors are opened,” with a drawer for cigarettes, playing cards, or counters that fit the modular storage series Tema. While the other publications listed sports awards, records, sewing supplies, cameras, family party games, and other activities that could be considered more in line with a wholesome lifestyle, Ikea’s approach to including alcohol and gambling says something about popular aspirations, perhaps what people actually had, or wanted to have, on display in their living room. As in the case with the plastic-covered seating groups and ornamented Wilton rugs in the questionnaire, Ikea dared to be more popular in its approach. The cocktail cabinet also featured in advertisements, such as the Royal System storage series (Fig. 6.16)

Ikea’s popular approach is in line with design historian Judy Attfield’s writing on the need for display within the postwar domestic interior. Here she compares the cocktail cabinet to the Victorian chiffonier or previous china cabinet, ostensibly functioning as storage but mainly an article for display. In the idealized, rationalized people’s home of

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78 Tarschys and Tarschys-Block, “Köpa möbler,” 60-61. Swedish text: “Man lämnar gluggar här och var för att placera sina minnessaker, vackra skålar, familjeporträtten som förr stod framme på skrivbordet.”
80 Judy Attfield, “The empty cocktail cabinet: display in the mid-century British domestic interior,” in Judy Attfield, Bringing Modernity home: Writings on popular design and material culture (Manchester and New
Sweden, however, Ikea did not integrate the luxury feature of a cocktail cabinet in a sideboard of a traditional dining set, as in Attfield’s examples from the U.K., but rather in a storage unit fitted for purpose in line with the design establishment’s research on “correct” measurements. In a country where aquavit was a common beverage served socially, while wine drinking was unfamiliar, the cocktail cabinet might have been as empty as in Attfield’s example, where people could not afford the makings of cocktails but the cabinet was recognizable as a “token parlour substitute.”

Ikea also embraced the research conducted by the SSF in Skäp, although it was not mentioned specifically. If Varié was presented as the new, exclusive series, the catalog promoted another storage series, System, as providing “rational space and good design,” because Gillis Lundgren had “thoroughly discussed measurements of shelves and cupboards and sizes of drawers.” The catalog further highlighted the factory’s rational production of the same side sections and drawers, among others, making a lower price possible. This is an example of how Ikea managed to adjust both to the current official discussions and to popular taste.

Magazines, books, and catalogs from the Co-op, Ikea, Bra bohag, and Allt i Hemmet—along with the official advice in Bosättning and God bostad—all promoted meticulous research on household possessions and the space these objects required. It was therefore no surprise that such wall arrangements became the most frequently sold

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81 Ibid., 68.
furniture type in the early 1960s in Sweden. The rational approach of investigating and measuring to make everything fit in the modern dwelling would not have become as popular had advisory publications and furniture catalogs not promoted it so heavily, making people feel they needed such storage furniture. Using the shelving and storage unit as a case study, it is also clear that Allt i Hemmet and Ikea moved in a slightly different direction. The magazine further promoted a cheaper do-it-yourself approach, and Ikea acknowledged people’s desire for display.

Among institutions, there was a strong belief that it was possible to make apartments and the furnishings in them even better and more adjusted to the needs of the people living there. These ideas were then readily spread by all the established publishing outlets. Some might say that this was another way of controlling citizens or governing their consumer behavior, instructing them about what was best. But the material of this study is permeated with good intentions based on research related to household possessions.

One question then follows: why would people follow these recommendations? Perhaps they agreed that the advice was reasonable and applied to the need for adding a unit to house the new television set and all the other objects—increasingly prevalent in the growing consumer society—while also giving space for their personal souvenirs and photographs. Or perhaps it is just another indication that people are influenced by what their neighbors and friends have. The vast number of people setting up home, either as young couples or moving from the countryside to a modern apartment in a suburb, drove

many Swedes to look for models on how to furnish a home. The phrase “keeping up with the Joneses” became popular in anglophone countries in the 1950s, but was a sentiment equally applicable to consumer behavior in postwar Sweden.\textsuperscript{84}

\textbf{Consumer Guidance in the Bedroom}

In a unified message, the advisory literature and catalogs continued their mission to raise awareness of the bed as the most important piece of furniture. This was also what Fredriksson had conveyed in her 1960 story about a young couple who set up their household in a rented room: “It went without saying that beds and bed linen could be bought for life now and would be of first-class quality; they would not dream of experimenting with some kind of sofa bed.”\textsuperscript{85} Fostering reasonable consumers, the ideal was to choose a quality mattress rather than compromising to afford bedsteads as well.

The 1950s recommendations stemming from the furniture investigation, along with the consumer agency’s publication, were now further spread by the Co-op, Bra bohag, Ikea, and in the official setting-up-home booklet \textit{Bosättning}. The mantra of “proper measurements, good bed frame, easy to take care of” included information on and illustrations of different kinds of supporting structure and mattresses, along with different qualities of quilts and blankets, including new synthetic fibers.\textsuperscript{86} Continuing the

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\textsuperscript{84} Attfield, “The empty cocktail cabinet,” 63.
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rationalizing rhetoric of the time, the Bra bohag catalog used hygienic arguments in favor of foam rubber and included health and medical arguments in its checklist on how to buy a bed.87 Ikea also continued their 1950s promotion of high-quality beds: “One can do without much in life, but not a comfortable bed. Therefore, it is wise to go for nice beds when one sets up home, even if the purse is slender and one or more things must be dispensed with.”88 The choice for the fully furnished one-bedroom apartment presented in the 1962 catalog was Aveny rekord, a set of twin beds with spring mattresses and a teak bedstead that made it possible to swing the beds to the side for easy cleaning. Ikea’s wall-mounted bedside table Paul was sold with the admonishment that “a bedroom should be as easy to clean as possible.”89

Ikea promoted more than utility, though. The bedroom’s “Italian chairs with graceful lines; thin, airy curtain; and lovely rosy ceiling lamp, should satisfy a young, newly married woman’s natural desire for a pinch of romance in her bedroom interior.”90 To speak of a romantic interior seemed far from the matter-of-factness of the other ideal one-bedroom apartments for newlyweds. Hygienic and medical consumer guidance and research results were spread in advisory literature, but also in commercial furniture catalogs. Scientific research could be used in promoting the importance of quality. The

87 Bra bohag, “Ett sovrum att längta till,” Bra bohag 1960-1961, 36-37. Contrary to other advice, however, the catalog represented furniture producers and thus included choosing bedsteads as the last point in its checklist for buying a bed; Bra bohag, “16 veckors semester det kan vi alla få!”, Bra bohag 1962/63, 8-9.
89 Ibid., 22. Swedish text: “Med tanke på att ett sovrum bör vara så lättstädat som möjligt har vi valt det trevliga nattbordet Paul som hängs på väggen.”
90 Ibid. Swedish text: “De italienska stolarnas graciösa linjer, den tunna luftiga gardinen och den rart rosenmönstrade taklampan bör kunna tillfredsställa en ung, nygift kvinnas naturliga längtan efter en nypa romantik i sin sovrumssinredning.”
Bra bohag catalog featured a “mattress tormentor,” which let a roller of 220 pounds (100 kg) roll over a Dux mattress 600,000 times, thus assuring more than 30 years of use for a person weighing 80 kg who turned about 50 times per night in the bed. In the first half of the 1960s, Ikea also highlighted such tests in its catalogs to illustrate the ideal of quality that promised to last a lifetime.

*Allt i Hemmet*, on the other hand, challenged the ideal of durable quality by promoting the cheap new material of plastic. The magazine argued that it is not necessary to spend hundreds of kronor on an expensive spring interior bed for the first home. In an article titled “Finally, a good cheap bed,” the magazine embraced a new material, plastic foam, and gave tips on how to check the quality in the shop. They also provided a comparative test of beds costing from 250 to 650 kronor with illustrative cross-section drawings of the mattresses, concluding that the plastic foam combined with a spring mattress was a bargain, but that the most expensive spring mattress with foam rubber gave “the purest sense of comfort that anything in today’s bed market can give.” While the ideal in *Allt i Hemmet* remained one of high quality, at the same time the editors invited the possibility of cheaper alternatives that might not last a lifetime.

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91 Bra bohag, “Kvalitet vill vi ha! – men hur skall vi vara säkra på att också få det?,” *Bra bohag: En tidning för alla hemintresserade säsongen 1960-1961* (Malmö: Bra bohag, 1960), 33-34. The article also included an image of the chair-breaker, a testing machine used by Bra bohag, according to methods developed by the SIS. The 1961 Ikea catalog promoted beds on its second page, including its bed-tormentor, working in a similar way to the one featured in Bra bohag. Möbel-Ikéa, *Katalog 1961*, 2.

92 Ek and Larsson, “Vi gifter oss!,” 8.

The early 1960s was a period of change in Sweden that represented a shift in traditional and modern attitudes toward textile production and care. Plastic foam as a new material in mattresses, synthetic fibers in quilts and blankets, the newly introduced quilt cover, ready-made sheets instead of home-sewn, and the washing machine all contributed to a simplification of the care of household textiles.\(^94\) In the February 1960 issue of *Allt i Hemmet*, textile firms took pride in providing “ready-made” cotton sheets with the VDN quality control, but they advised that “there should be lace on sheets and pillowcases—then they are the most beautiful!”\(^95\) The drawing in the advertisement shows a woman waking up and stretching her arms above her head in a modern double bed, adorned traditionally with a lace-decorated sheet folded over the blanket and matching pillowcases. (Fig. 6.17) In between the traditional and the modern, the lace advertisement showed the old-fashioned way of making the bed with sheets decorated with lace—“a luxury you can indulge in”—but justified by modern technology and rationalization: “the beautiful, durable lace is machine washable.”\(^96\)

Another step toward the simplification came with the quilt cover, an envelope of easily laundered fabric holding a quilt or coverlet. In 1961, *Allt i Hemmet* featured a full-

\(^{94}\) Diurson, “Bädda en skön säng,” 37-39; “Vi provar de nya täckena.” The change is further visible in comparison to the book *Hemgiften* (The Dowry) in a third edition from 1960, which explains how to sew your own sheets from purchased cotton fabric, a method that the author encourages rather than weaving your own sheets, which may not be worthwhile economically even though one has the time to do it. While the quilt cover is not yet common in households, the book, which first came out in 1950, includes 36 pages of suggestions of traditional and modern embroideries and lace to decorate the sheets with, plus six pages on various ways to embroider the initials with the owner’s monogram on bed linen. Further, *Hemgiften* includes sections on pillow cases, towels, tablecloths, quilts, and blankets, and explains the textile dowry in old and contemporary days, including a list of what a family of four needs in terms of sheets, towels, etc.


page advertisement showing a striped pink quilt cover and matching pillowcase with a woman barely visible in this “bed made for dreams.” In spite of romantic references to sweet dreams and a big white bow on the woman’s ponytail, the selling point was the VDN quality label. The quilt cover, which had long been used in hotels and sleeping cars in Sweden, protected the blanket or quilt while also simplifying making the bed. In the late 1950s, mail-order firms began spreading this utilitarian device to private homes, but it was not until the 1960s that they became more common, first as softly striped pastels, then with more colorful patterns designed by famous textile artists such as Viola Gråsten.

The 1965 setting-up-home brochure Bosättning further promoted the simplification of both materials and work. Using the first person plural as a rhetorical device, the text affirmed that, “we do not have the same high standards on the amount and decoration of the ‘household linen’ as previous generations,” which required a mangle or careful ironing. Instead, the brochure recommended textiles “that require little or no treatment after washing: terry cloth for bathroom towels, waffle weave for kitchen towels, crinkled cotton for quilt covers and everyday tablecloths, synthetic fabrics with linen-like structure (such as Dacron and Acrylic) for more festive tablecloths.”

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98 Diurson, “Bädda en skön säng.” 38; Womack, Sovrummet, 107-108; and advertisements, such as from Nordiska fjäderfabriken selling synthetic and cotton quilts designed by Viola Grästen from Mölnlycke Hemtextil and Marianne Nilsson from NK’s textile department, with typical wording: “Today’s sleeping fashion is more airy, light, and fresh.” Allt i Hemmet 5, no. 9 (1960): back page. Swedish text: “Dagens sovmode är luftigare, lättare och fräschare.” In 1968, Allt i Hemmet indicated that there was more color than ever before and presented duvet covers from Epa, Domus (the Co-op), NK, and Åhléns-Tempo, some of which did not have to be mangled, a further simplification. Marie Oljelund, “Nu är det roligare och lättare att bädda,” Allt i Hemmet 13, no. 2 (1968): 24-27.

Gone were the days when young women embroidered their initials on linen dowry pieces to mark ownership, and perhaps included their husband’s initial when later complementing linen storage. They no longer applied ribbons to pillowcases in decorative patterns visible when the linen cupboard was opened. On the other hand, other requirements increased, which took time in other ways. When *Allt i Hemmet* tested new blankets and quilts, Birgitta Ek wondered how often one really needed to wash a quilt and speculated about the time it would take at home: “Since the new fibers came, we have completely new standards that everything around us should be washed often—preferably in water at home”—when in reality such a quilt did not require washing more often than one could afford to leave it at a dry cleaner. In her view, frequent washing was an exaggerated ideal that had developed just because it was possible with the new materials and machines. Instead, Ek promoted “the wonderful quilt cover” using the still typical rational and hygienic arguments, “as it gives the most easily managed bed that is thinkable and the most hygienic.” In a rational consumer guidance tone, she even questioned the display of color and pattern on quilts, “Does one not get tired of living with these quilts pretty soon?” and concluded that it would be best to buy a quilt with a filling and plain fabric of the best quality available. This conclusion—and the recommendation in the advisory literature to spend money on high-quality mattresses

100 Ek, “Fryser ni? Vi vet varför!,” 98. Swedish text: “Sedan de nya fibrerna kommit har vi fått helt nya krav på att allt ikring oss skall tvättas ofta – helst i vatten hemma.”


“tröttnar man inte på att leva med de täckena rätt snart?” It should be noted that the quilt cover was so new in Sweden that it had not yet received the name it has today; it was called *lakanspåse* rather than *påslakan.*
rather than on fancy bedsteads—furthered the ideal of timeless, durable quality in the first half of the 1960s.

The Official Advice: Testable Function rather than Cozy Atmosphere

The wholesome tone of functionality, quality, and durability of the advisory publications of the early 1960s was confirmed in the official setting-up-home brochure of 1965. In comparison to the 1955 edition, which highlighted the home’s perceived cozy atmosphere, the tone was completely different in the later publication: “It is nice if the basis of the home comprises such things that are easy to cope with. If the table, the chair, the bed, the lamp, and everything else, which is used day and night, fulfill their tasks so well that they do not cause irritation. There are lots of examples of the opposite: the glaring lamp, the drawer that gets stuck, the armchair that is barely moveable.” Starting with pure utility, there is not one word about making the home pleasant or beautiful; rather, the brochure emphasizes scientific research on furniture quality, standardized measurements, and consumer guidance.

In contrast, the 1955 Bosättning began with photos of a young couple sitting close to each other at a table planning their home and a family happily engaged in activities by the big table in the living room. (See fig. 2.14) The caption under the couple exclaimed: “To decorate one’s own home, what a fun task!” highlighting the pleasure of making a home comfortable and pleasant. The word used here is trivsamt, “practical,” even “beautiful”:

“The home shall be pleasant, beautiful, and easy to keep tidy. It can be beautiful in many ways, but becomes nice and comfortable once it is also practical and useful for its owners.”\textsuperscript{103} In comparison, the 1965 edition had no photos, only drawings, and began in a matter-of-fact-manner with the contour of a house including line drawings of the dwelling’s functions. In one, a woman is shown pulling out a drawer, as depicted in Allt i Hemmet and God bostad, and sitting at her desk in a work chair. In another drawing, a couple sits in their armchairs, and someone is eating, sleeping, and washing his face. (Fig. 6.18) Both in terms of visual representations and rhetoric, the 1965 Bosättning stressed pure utility and things that would not irritate.

\textbf{Caution with the Couch}

In an effort to instill informed consumption rather than its conspicuous cousin, Bosättning explained the importance of knowing one’s own situation, and to choose home furnishings “that suit us, our taste and economy, our habits,” so that we “do not bother to ogle ‘what the Svenssons have’ and feel anxious about ‘how it usually is.’”\textsuperscript{104} (The name Svensson here is used as the Swedish equivalent of “keeping up with the Joneses.”) While modernists took up the battle against matching furniture suites in revival styles as impractical status seeking, the equivalent in the early 1960s was the seating group, a central focus of the living room. Under the heading “Furniture to


\textsuperscript{104} Krantz-Jensen, \textit{Bosättning} (1965), 1. Swedish text: “Vi behöver känna oss själva och vår situation, så att vi väljer det bohag och husgeråd som passar just oss, vår smak och ekonomi, våra vanor. Struntar i att snegla på ‘vad Svensssons har’ och att ängsla oss för ‘hur det brukar vara’.”
socialize in,” Henrikson-Abelin encouraged the readers to find other solutions than the prevalent sofa with two armchairs or two sofas opposite each other because, as a group, these were expensive to acquire and challenging to integrate with other furnishings. The juxtaposition of rational and irrational consumption warned against compulsive behavior: “As we all know, one elegance leads to another to form a pretty whole.”¹⁰⁵ The rhetoric was similar to that of the 1930s and 1940s, but it was less about choosing an appropriate style and more a concern about conspicuous consumption in setting up home. In the supplement “We are getting married!” in 1962, Ek and Larsson emphasized that “there are so many show-off traps: expensive wall shelving, posh seating groups, fragile carpets.”¹⁰⁶

*Allt i Hemmet* gave its version of how a newly married couple should furnish their one-bedroom apartment within the limit of the setting-up-home loan of 4,000 kronor. (Fig. 6.19) In an effort to instill more values that gave greater freedom to the private economy and adaptability when the children arrived, Ek and Larsson affirmed that “Wise is the one who dares to concentrate on the improvised, the changeable,” meaning to “save on the expensive and be lavish with what is cheap: curtain fabric, color, nice lighting.”¹⁰⁷ The Co-op’s *Sätta bo* also questioned the seating group on the grounds of expense, and *Allt i Hemmet* went even further: “Who says one needs a sofa—nobody. One can certainly get a seating group anyway with a table and some comfortable chairs.” Yet Ek

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. Swedish text: “Klok är den som vågar satsa på det improviserade, det föränderliga. . . om man snålar med det som är dyrt och slösar med det som är billigt: gardintyg, färger, fin belysning.”
and Larsson acknowledged that, “in spite of that, many do want a sofa anyway,” especially when friends come over. As examples of comfortable chairs, the magazine depicted the same armchairs and wicker chair as in Sätta bo, reaffirming the close links in advice between the magazine and the Co-op. Allt i Hemmet, however, went a step further by suggesting that consumers make their sofa themselves, for just 200 kronor. Even in comparison with the Co-op, do-it-yourself furniture was a novelty in 1962.

Following the Co-op’s and Allt i Hemmet’s rational advice, the official setting-up-home brochure Bosättning persuaded buyers to approach a couch with caution. The author Hildur Krantz-Jensen, a journalist specializing in housing issues, acknowledged that the sofa with one or two easy chairs follows a tradition as social furniture, yet she urged caution: “But the couch is pretty demanding both in terms of cash and square meters.” Bosättning makes no mention of the need for a couch, but it encourages the reader to think about space and whether it would be possible to arrange a comfortable group for socializing without a couch.

Rational Consumption in the Living Room according to Bra Bohag

In contrast to Allt i Hemmet, the Co-op’s Sätta bo, and the official setting-up-home brochure’s advice, there was no doubt in Bra bohag that a couple with social ambition should have a seating group: “For the group of sofa and armchairs, they picked Monterey,

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109 Ibid., 2, and Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962), 19, 55, 46.

110 Ek and Larsson, “Vi gifter oss!”, 2, 3, 7. See also, Fredriksson, “Sätta bo utan lägenhet,” 26-29, 33.


112 Ibid.
which appears so slender with its open-work back.” It was moss green with armrests and legs of solid teak.\(^\text{113}\) (Fig. 6.20)

As a furniture producer’s collaborative project, Bra bohag offered a more conventional approach in their suggestion of a one-bedroom apartment for a newly married couple in the 1961–62 catalog. While the scene reveals a settled family tableau, the catalog claimed that the family had moved into one of the new one-bedroom apartments provided by a public utilities housing company, of the same type as those chosen by newlyweds with more modest jobs.\(^\text{114}\) The text gives no indication of a budget for home furnishings. While Mr. Strömberg was an engineer, the catalog does not mention a profession for Mrs. Strömberg, only that she takes care of the baby and really likes the kitchen couch “where she can invite the wife next door to sit down when she does not want to interrupt dinner preparations while still desiring some company.”\(^\text{115}\)

Whereas the couple in the Co-op story both have their professions, Bra bohag here conveys more traditional gender roles. Mr. Strömberg has “a reading corner” with the couch and “good light from the floor lamp,” while Mrs. Strömberg has a light armchair where “she has her sewing things right within reach.”\(^\text{116}\) The fact that they are called Mr. 


\(^{114}\) Ibid., 28. Svenska bostäder is one of a number of public good housing companies. The brochure included a plan of the apartment of 61 square meters, designed by architect Sverker Feuk. Bra bohag’s book *Bo bättre, trivas mera* also included a short story of a couple moving into a one-bedroom apartment, before and after the baby, another short section about a family in a two-bedroom apartment, and a third about a couple in a studio. Sandegård, “Något om möblering,” 20-25. This is not as detailed as in the brochure, however. The young couple is presented as “practical and wise” and aware of quality: “It is better to go for a few good pieces of furniture and complement when one can afford it.” Ibid., 20-21. Swedish text: “Det är bättre att satsa på få men bra möbler och komplettera när man får råd.”

\(^{115}\) Bra bohag, *Bra bohag 1961–62*, 29. Swedish text: “Där kan hon bjuda grannfrun att sitta när hon inte vill avbryta förberedelserna för middagen och ändå gärna vill ha litet sällskap.” Another feature in the Bra bohag catalog further conveys what is most likely a housewife’s ideal, telling the story of a man coming home from work while his wife is at home preparing dinner. Ibid., 3.

\(^{116}\) Ibid., 28. Swedish text: “I soffan har ingenjör Strömberg sin läshörna med bra ljus från golvlampan. Den
and Mrs. instead of their first names, as Inger and Lasse in the Co-op publication, adds a formal tone to the Bra bohag catalog.

Inger had a real workplace with a desk and sewing machine for her projects, but Mrs. Strömberg’s sewing things are not even visible in the image, though Mr. Strömberg’s books are on the coffee table. Making her activities invisible and his visible, the living room gives an air of having the “right” things on display. These include an orange Ericophone (the modern Swedish one-piece telephone produced by Ericsson from 1956), as well as contemporary Lisa Larsson ceramics from Gustavsberg on the bookshelf and a couple of glass vases by Nils Landgren for Orrefors next to the television. The dining table of solid oak is justified by the fact that it is also a workplace, according to the catalog, which also points out that the two funnel-shaped copper lamps above the table are white-lacquered inside to give good light.¹¹⁷

The furnishings shown in the Bra bohag catalog are practical and durable, down to the checkered Swedish woven rug of cow hair underneath the table. The overall impression of the furnishings in this one-bedroom apartment is that of durable materials—solid teak and oak, cow-hair rug, copper lamps—accompanied by a refined selection of objects such as Orrefors glass. The Strömberg couple may well have bought their furnishings for a lifetime, representative of rational consumers in the 1960s whose vision for their apartment is based on a long-term living arrangement.

The Bra bohag catalogs had evolved from a simple product catalog to an attractive magazine, with stories of people and their interiors that could inspire future customers.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 28, 39.
The first Bra bohag catalog in 1956–1957 had black-and-white photos of individual pieces of furniture and one interior on the back page. The following year, Bra bohag hired the advertising agency Antoni & Gehlin to produce the catalog. A color image of a model living room on the cover heralded the new approach. Inside the catalog, Lena Larsson and four other interior designers offered advice on how to furnish different rooms through texts and color images of interiors. The renewal of the Bra bohag catalog was the result of editor Brita Svenonius-Lang, who soon would offer her services to Ingvar Kamprad.

The Ikea Catalog as a Source of Advice

In 1961, to further target young people getting married, Ikea made significant changes to the catalog and strengthened its advisory mission. For the first time, the cover featured a complete interior and the catalog began with nine full-page images of interiors instead of the usual focus on seating furniture. The featured interiors were intended for a whole range of people—from the bachelor, single woman, and the young family to the family with boys and girls in school. As would later be common in Ikea stores, the interiors shown were becoming sources of inspiration for how to decorate your own

[119] Ibid., 2-8.
[120] Möbel-Ikéa, *Katalog 1961*, cover, 10-28. In the previous catalog covers, the focus was on graphic design, especially in 1955–1958, when Gillis Lundgren had become the head of advertising and signed the covers featuring typically 1950s graphics. In 1959, the graphics correspond to the slogan “a look at furniture to wish for” with a stylized half eye that serves as a television frame with a blue carpet and two chairs inside, which could be seen as the iris of the eye. In 1960, a pair of glasses dominated the cover, with a piece of a dining set and TV interior inside the frames. The 1961 cover was completely different again, now with a straightforward living room interior with seating group and dining set, and a television placed in a shelving and storage system. Full rooms had been underrepresented in previous editions of the catalog, with only a few exceptions for living room interiors with television. Bra bohag also featured living room interiors from the time the advertising agency started working on the publication.
home. This significant change, making the Ikea catalog more tempting and informative for those seeking to furnish different types of households, derived from the work of editor Brita Svenonius-Lang, who had previously worked with the Bra Bohag catalogs in her capacity at the advertising agency Antoni & Gehlin AB in Stockholm.121

Having seen what she thought was a clever advertisement in the main newspaper Dagens Nyheter, Svenonius-Lang wrote to Kamprad to congratulate him while asking: “Are you completely satisfied with Möbel-Ikéa’s catalog and do you think it has a design that corresponds to the intentions of the company?”122 Referring to the note in the catalog about membership in the SSF, Svenonius-Lang interpreted this as a sign of aesthetic ambition. Ikea’s merchandise included “commodities that would also interest an aesthetically trained clientele,” but she identified the problem: “It is practically impossible to discover given the way they are presented in the catalog.” Since Swedes were deeply interested in interior design, she asked Kamprad if he had not thought about having beautiful images of complete interiors: “Like nobody else, you have the possibility to show how one can decorate a beautiful home at amazingly low cost. I would like to help you in that work.”123

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121 Tony Nilsson, archivist at Inter Ikea Culture Center AB, e-mailed the information when I had commented that the 1961 catalog was particularly interesting, since Ikea started showing interiors of complete rooms at the beginning of this catalog. He attached the advertisement and the letter from Brita Svenonius-Lang to Ingvar Kamprad of November 27, 1959, and the response of December 15, 1959. E-mail to author, October 6, 2014.


With her experience working with Dux, Bra bohag, among others, Kamprad immediately created a position to work on the catalog and sent her the job announcement before it was published. While acknowledging her points, Kamprad wrote, however, that Ikea’s standpoint was to reach “a clientele as broad as possible.” After this correspondence, Svenonius-Lang worked as a consultant for a few months a year on the production of the 1961–1963 catalogs. She was the driving force behind the new development of the catalog.

Comparing the differences between Ikea and Bra bohag catalogs in the late 1950s, the texts about dressing tables and bedrooms are telling examples. Having produced homemaker films in the 1950s, Svenonius-Lang knew how to package messages aimed at women in a compelling way, which the Bra bohag catalogs demonstrate. While Ingvar

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125 Ibid. He also wrote that they are seeking to use the catalog as a means to attract people to visit Älmhult. Swedish text: “Ur vår synpunkt har det ansetts intressant att komma i kontakt med så bred publik som möjligt och i allt högre grad arbeta med katalogen som ett medium att intressera folk för ett besök i Älmhult.”
126 Tony Nilsson, archivist, e-mail to author, October 6 and 7, 2014. Nilsson assumes that she was the brains behind the development of the catalog and, as an archivist, he noted that Kamprad also asks her to write texts, but she was not responsible for the whole production of the catalog. Like today, it took up a great deal of Ikea’s annual work, and Nilsson describes it as identifying gaps in the assortment, ordering drawings from in-house and external designers, arranging with the suppliers to assure delivery for the whole year to the price in the catalog, etc. The group taking part in these meetings, among others, are: Ingvar Kamprad; Gillis Lundgren, head of advertising and designer; Sven-Göte Hansson, buyer; Ragnar Sterte, a buyer focusing on imports, e.g., from Poland; Bengt Ruda, head of the design office; and IB Bayley, secretary. According to Nilsson, the role of Brita Svenonius-Lang was above all the design and photography of the catalog. Eva Atle Branestam writes that Ingvar Kamprad first met Gillis Lundgren in 1952, when he needed help with the catalog. Lundgren was educated at Malmö Technical School and worked at Gummaelius advertising agency in Malmö with Dux, among others. In 1954, he started at Ikea as head of advertising and was responsible for the catalog for more than fifteen years, eventually becoming responsible for the assortment and products. He also designed around 400 pieces of furniture and products during five decades at Ikea, including the pedestal Tore and the denim seating furniture Tajt. Atle Bjarnestam, *Ikea – design och identitet*, 42.
127 In the online archive of Swedish Television, SVT, the Swedish public service television company, there are two films from 1954 produced by Brita Svenonius, one on teenage fashion and one showcasing the benefits of labor- and time-saving cooking using cans and frozen food from the Co-op. In one of the stories, Mrs. Bengtsson and Mrs. Andersson meet in the modern supermarket. While Mrs. Andersson buys all produce and makes the vegetable soup and pancakes from scratch, Mrs. Bengtsson buys a pancake mix to
Kamprad, who wrote the Ikea texts himself until the early 1960s, targeted the husband as the buyer, Bra bohag spoke directly from a woman’s perspective, likely the result of Svenonius-Lang’s copy direction.

In 1955, the Ikea catalog presented the wall-mounted dressing table *Make Up* with this introduction: “Most ladies have a weakness for some luxury—why not surprise your wife with our nice new dressing shelf. She would surely appreciate it.” Emphasizing the traditional gender roles where the man is often depicted sitting down in his easy chair, smoking a pipe and reading, the text contradicted the otherwise wholesome advisory literature: “In order to make it fair, you could pick out something nice for yourself at the same time—the cocktail cabinet Bacci, for example, or a really comfortable easy chair.”

Rather than rational guidelines, Ikea realized that emotions and gendered consumer preferences drove these purchases. This patriarchal rhetoric was typical of advertisements of the time, but unusual for the other consumer-minded sources. Even in 1957, in spite of promoting a modern approach in the introduction and assortment, as we have seen in previous chapters, the overtly sexist tone was still there: “A new retreat for our ladies. We men expect that our wives look neat and sweet. It is only reasonable that she gets to have a makeup corner so as to live up to our expectations. Look at this little nice dressing table.”

In contrast, the Bra bohag text presented all needs as worthy of which she just needs to add water, as well as a can of mixed vegetables and stock cubes that also call for water to prepare. When she is serving dinner for her family, Mrs. Andersson has just finished chopping the vegetables in this pedagogical comparison with a clear message. Internet link sent in e-mail from Tony Nilsson, October 6, 2014, http://www.oppetarkiv.se/etikett/medverkande/Brita_Svenonius/.

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accommodation: “Why should one need to go to the bathroom to file nails or have one’s hair set? There is a whole lot of such female—and also male—small toilet businesses that one would like to potter about in the bedroom.” No wonder Svenonius-Lang thought that there was room for improvement in the Ikea catalog.

Following the 1961 edition, the catalog further developed its advisory voice. The introduction stated Ikea’s mission to provide for the young couples setting up home, presenting the catalog as “a good guidebook in the modern world of interiors, a valuable help for all of you who are thinking about setting up home or complementing your home.” Starting in 1955, Ikea provided a decorating service, in which a questionnaire determined the taste and needs of the customer. The 1961 catalog now introduced a new service, lending a box with samples of furnishing textiles, woods, and surface treatments along with “valuable ideas for you who are setting up home.”

Design and cultural historian Åke Livstedt, who set up home in the 1960s, summarizes the role of Ikea: “What the SSF couldn't achieve in 100 years, Ikea achieved in ten: to create a communal taste.” He means that all the effort the organization made in teaching people how to live did not reach the general public until Ikea shared a similar gospel. Reading the Ikea catalogs of the early 1960s reminds one of reading

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132 Möbel-Ikéa, Katalog 1961, 3. The introduction also promoted many new pieces of furniture developed for everyone setting up home. Swedish text: “Den nya Ikéa-katalogen som Ni nu håller i handen är en god vägvisare i den moderna inredningsvärlden, en värdefull hjälp för alla Er som tänker sätta bo eller komplettera Ert hem.”
Heminredning by Larsson and Svedberg and publications spread from the 1930s through the 1950s. In the 1961 Ikea catalog, the furniture suites are disposed of as belonging to the parents’ generation and, accordingly, the 1962 catalog emphasizes the importance of choosing furniture piece by piece, according to one’s own needs and taste.\textsuperscript{135}

In the catalogs of the 1960s, remarks about representational value and friends who would become envious of your furniture were gone. Now it was more important that the living room be “practical and easy to keep tidy.”\textsuperscript{136} Ikea made an effort to reach the young couples setting up home, and, as in Allt i Hemmet, Bra bohag, and the Co-op, the 1962 catalog included a suggestion of how a newlywed couple could furnish a one-bedroom apartment within the limits of the state setting-up-home loan of 4,000 kronor.\textsuperscript{137} (Fig. 6.21) Following the ideal that modernist architects and designers had promoted for decades, Ikea presented the living room as “the center of family life,” where “we socialize with ourselves, with friends, [pursue] hobbies,” and relax.\textsuperscript{138} To further engage the reader and make these notions become the reader’s, the catalog used “we” in the text.

The choice of furniture was modern in its style, yet consistent with tradition, with a seating group, coffee table, sideboard, and dining set, though not a complete suite. To convey a modern sensibility, the catalog presented Rittak, the upholstered sofa and armchair on wooden legs, as having “a modern, simplistic, but still softly inviting form

\textsuperscript{135} Möbel-Ikéa, Katalog 1961, 12; Möbel-Ikea, Katalog 1962, 18.
\textsuperscript{136} Möbel-Ikea, Katalog 1962, 20. Swedish text: “Och praktiskt vill vi ha det och lättkött.”
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 18-23. The furniture was about 3,000 kr so as to leave 1,000 for linen, household goods, and cleaning utilities.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 20. Swedish text: “Vardagsrummet – centrum för familjelivet Samlingspunkten för familjen där vi umgås med oss själva, med vänner och hobbies, där vi kopplar om eller av.”
and a calm objectivity in its lines.” This ideal of a practical interiors chosen piece by piece according to the needs rather than striving for a representative interior that follow a conventional, status-filled ideal meant that, by the early 1960s, Ikea was spreading the same message as the SSF and other organizations had been promoting at least since the 1930s.

The Fear of Flowery Wallpaper

Nevertheless, Ikea dared to once again provoke the current advisory literature on home decoration. The advertising copy describing the first interior shown in the 1962 catalog offered an image of an airy dining room with “a light, white curtain on an old-fashioned turned wooden curtain holder” and “perhaps even a flowery wallpaper.” There were no flowery walls in the contemporary advice manuals. The following year, however, Allt i Hemmet realized that floral patterned wallpapers were coming back; along the same lines as Ikea, the magazine reasoned that it “perhaps was a revolt against the sober objectivity that has prevailed over the past decade in interior decoration.” Yet the magazine advised readers to be “infinitely careful with flowery wallpapers,” and included eight examples of “how a good flower pattern shall look,” with selections that were available in stores.

139 Ibid. Swedish text: “Soffgruppen Rittak har en modernt enkel men ändå mjukt inbjudande form och lugn saklighet i linjerna som är mycket tilltalande.”
140 Ibid., 10. Swedish text: “en sky av luftig vit gardin uppsatt på gammaldags trästång med svarvade knoppar, kanske till och med en blommig tapet.”
141 Eivor Jonazon and Lena Larsson, “Skall våra väggar blomma?,” Allt i Hemmet 8, no. 7 (1963): 71. Swedish text: “Kanske är det i revolut mot den sobra sakligheten som präglat senaste decenniets inredningsmode som den här längtan efter blommighet, färg och djärva mönster börjar ta sig uttryck. . . . man måste vara oändligt försiktig med blommiga tapeter . . . Vi visar bilderna som prov på hur bra blommönster ska se ut.” The magazine expressed the same fear in 1958, see Fredriksson and Larsson, “Vi
Six of the eight “approved” wallpapers were designed by the English reformer William Morris, one was a Swedish eighteenth-century wallpaper reprinted from the royal Drottningholm theater, and another was a traditional Swedish design from the beginning of the nineteenth century; thus, they were all reproductions of older wallpapers. Allt i Hemmet’s taste-making efforts in terms of wallpaper were not unique, but rather an affirmation of an investigation carried out by the SSF in 1963, which resulted in “800 approved patterns.” Bra bohag’s Bo bättre, trivas mera praised this as a “first step in the work to weed out . . . the overwhelming amount of dreadful horrors without kinship with the patterns one wants to accept.” Like the efforts undertaken a century before to promote reformed design and improve public taste, similar taste-making efforts returned anew in mid-1960s Sweden, spreading broadly in a popular magazine and in a new setting-up-home book.

The increasing number of advisory publications all contributed to the importance of consumer guidance at the time, demonstrated in the launch of institutions such as the VDN and the magazine Råd & Rön. Allt i Hemmet and the other advisory sources strengthened their mission to promote awareness of quality, functionality, and well-reasoned home planning, informed by their resolve to create an educated, reasonable sitter i köket,” 29-35.

consumer. Ikea simultaneously rejected judging anyone's taste while it promoted modernist furnishing ideals and embraced rational arguments of state agencies.
Chapter Seven

Simplification and Informality in the Kitchen and Living Room

The rising number of women entering the labor market in the early 1960s coincided with a simplification of products and habits, thanks to technology, innovations in household goods, and behavior related to eating in the kitchen. As this chapter will show, multifunctionality, simplification, and informal entertainment—areas already changing notably in the previous decade—continued to be promoted in this period.

In Bra bohag’s 1963 handbook, Bo bättre, trivas mera, setting-up-home consultant Lilly Arrhenius noted that, “since it is customary for both the woman and man to work outside the home and rarely have access to domestic servants, the home must be easy to keep tidy and practical,” capturing the social shifts of the era. Whereas Allt i Hemmet barely mentioned the question of domestic help, Bra bohag targeted a traditional middle

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1 Until 1960, the private sector had special salaries for women, on average 25 percent lower than those for men; this was justified through the assumption that men were more often responsible for providing for the family. While the state had abolished this agreement in 1947, the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (SAF) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) agreed in 1960 to introduce equal pay for equal work by 1965. Anita Göransson, “Från hushåll och släkt till marknad och stat,” in Sverige – en social och ekonomisk historia, ed. Susanna Hedenborg and Mats Morell (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006), 251-52.

2 Arrhenius, “Bo bättre, trivas mera,” 9. Swedish text: “Eftersom ofta både man och hustru arbetar utom hemmet och sällan har tillgång till någon hemhjälp, måste hemmet vara lättskött och praktiskt.” The question of domestic help had been discussed in the 1930s and early 1940s, when legislation in 1944 came to protect the rights of domestic labor; it was at this time that they first received regulated leisure time, i.e., not work hours. It was not until 1971 that maids as the last professional group got a regulated workday of eight hours. Hirdman, Lundberg, and Björkman, Sveriges historia 1920-1965, 77, 577. Emma Strollo discusses the phenomenon of the German women who came to work in Swedish households in the 1950s and 1960s. By that time, it was less common to have domestic help, and the dissertation discusses the German women as the last group of such workers. Emma Strollo, Det städade folkhemmet: Tyskfödda hembiträden i efterkrigstidens Sverige, Ph.D. diss. (Stockholm: Makadam förlag, 2013).
class that once had domestic help. Women’s work was changing: in 1930, a record-high one fourth of all women undertaking paid work were domestic servants; but from 1930 to 1950, that number was cut in half. In 1939, women won the right to continue to work, even when they got married or had children, and thereafter the number of married working women increased. As more women entered the labor market, the maintenance of the home needed to be simplified, Arrhenius observed.

**Adopting Kitchen Technology to Aid the Working Woman**

In 1960, *Allt i Hemmet* began discussing the need for the whole family to work in the kitchen. In her article, Birgit Sunesson predicted that the new electric equipment, dishwashers, and freezers would inspire men and children to use the kitchen, combined with an increase in their interest in cooking. Above all, she stressed “the necessity to force the whole family into the kitchen,” since more and more married women would start working after seven years of “child duty” at home and fewer would want to work as housekeepers in families. The Swedish standard kitchen intended that one person would prepare food, do dishes, and so on, and all the measurements were decided on the basis of the height of an average woman. She was 164 cm tall plus heels. (See fig. 2.3) She was

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3 Birgit Sunesson speaks of maids as belonging to a past bourgeois dream that does not belong in the modern suburbs, as not many want to work and live under such circumstances any longer. More married women wanted to work outside the home, making it important to offer labor-friendly kitchens where the whole family can work. Birgit Sunesson, “Vad gör man i ett kök?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 5, no. 9 (1960): 58-63.
5 Arrhenius, “Bo bättre, trivas mera,” 10.
the ideal homemaker and household expert of the 1950s. The kitchen was a gendered space. Therefore, Sunesson sought larger kitchens, with space to work side by side, and had started *Allt i Hemmet*'s contribution to a debate about gender equality in the home.

The Consumer Institute’s investigation of one thousand “homemakers about work at home,” showed, however, that there was a long way to go. In only a tenth of the households, men and children took part in cooking, laundry, and cleaning, while in a fourth of the households, men and children participated in washing the dishes, grocery shopping, and making of beds; in other words, these were tasks that were considered simpler and less time consuming. Nevertheless, the investigation noted that there was a tendency for men to be more active in household work where the woman was gainfully employed.⁷ For the authorities, a concrete way of encouraging men’s participation in household work was to change the school curriculum. Until 1962, the home economics curriculum implied that women were responsible for cooking nutritious food and caring for the home, as the boys did not have to participate in this practical education. After 1962, these courses were also compulsory for boys.⁸

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⁷ Carin Boalt, “Tid för hemarbete. Hur lång tid då?,” in *Den okända vardagen – om arbetet i hemmen*, Brita Åkerman et al. (Stockholm: Förlaget Akademilitteratur AB, 1983), 47-49. The investigation into household work was conducted by the Consumer Institute in 1957 in a national selection of 1,340 households with children under 16 years of age living at home, including women staying at home full-time as well as women working full-time or part-time outside the home. In eight percent of the households, there was some kind of paid help. The study was published in 1961: Carin Boalt, *1000 husmödrar om hemarbetet*, Konsumentinstitutet meddelar, no. 9 (Stockholm: Statens Institut för Konsumentfrågor, 1961). She also refers to similar investigations from 1937 to 1976.

⁸ Aléx, *Konsumera rätt*, 92-93. Already in the late 1930s, many social democrats started arguing that also boys would get some education in the care of the home and family. Ibid., 84. Piamaria Hallberg, curator of the Stockholm City Museum, has documented this change by interviewing Agnes Thörnblom, home economics teacher who confirmed that the subject in the 1960s intended to teach the children to help out in the household work at home, so as to facilitate for working mothers. Transcribed interview in project 80+, Stockholms stadsmuseum, 9.
In addition to bringing men and children into household work, Allt i Hemmet focused on aspects that could save time and labor for women since more and more had jobs. As it disseminated the results of the Consumer Institute’s investigation, the magazine spread the conclusion that women working outside the home spent almost as much time as housewives on household work. They were cooking, preserving, doing laundry, scrubbing floors, and performing other, related tasks; although the time spent on cooking was decreasing, working women basically did the same job as housewives. What surprised Sunesson most was that working women in the study did not have better kitchen equipment or more machines, and did not use more frozen and canned food than the housewives. Allt i Hemmet understood its mission as encouraging women to take advantage of the new opportunities available to them, and to realign the ambition of being the perfect homemaker while also undertaking paid work:

It is mother’s meatballs and mother-in-law’s butter cookies and dad’s meat soup that prevent us from thinking clearly, when we stand in the grocery store choosing between minced meat in the usual manner or deep-frozen meatballs, between ready-made cookies and flour, sugar, and butter, between meat that should boil in broth for four hours and ready-made soup in a can. Mother’s meatballs are the most awful of all domestic tyrants, as it gives us working women a bad conscience and a feeling of guilt, as well as readily making us martyrs. We preserve, bake, mend pant seats, knit and sew and wash even at night, but God help our husbands and our children, if they do not notice that!

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10 Sunesson, "Mammas köttbullar," 13. Swedish text: "Det är Mammas Köttbullar och svärmons småkakor och pappas köttsoppa som hindrar oss att tänka klart, när vi står i affären och väljer mellan köttfärs på vanligt manér och djupfrysta köttbullar, mellan färdigköpta småkakor och mjölksocker och smör, mellan buljongkött som ska koka fyra timmar och färdig soppa på burk. Mammas Köttbullar är den förfärligaste av alla hustyranner, för utom att den ger oss förvärvsarbetande kvinnor dåligt samvete och skuldkänslor, gör den oss så lätt till martyrer. Vi konserverar, bakar, lagar byxbakar, stickar och syr och tvättar t.o.m. på nätterna, men gud nåde våra äkta män och våra barn, om de inte lägger märke till det!" See also chapter six, the text on Brita Svenonius, who had produced films on this theme before working for
As a voice for consumer guidance, *Allt i Hemmet* promoted freezers, frozen and canned food. The magazine further featured articles about dishwashers, automatic washing machines, and new synthetic fibers that did not need ironing. In 1964, Birgitta Ek wrote an article celebrating all the time- and labor-saving features that were now available, compared with when she was newly married twenty years before. Like her colleague Sunesson, Ek encouraged working women setting up home to rely on these new options as much as possible in order to find time to listen, relax in the evening, or have time to read a book without being interrupted.\(^\text{11}\)

*God bostad* of the 1960s confirmed that the development of the kitchen at the time dealt more with new technical appliances than rational planning, the layout of the workspace, and individual cupboards, which had been the focus of discussions in the 1940s and 1950s. Although *God bostad* noted the growing popularity of freezers, the official view was somewhat hesitant. In 1960, the housing board stated that freezers and freezer compartments were not yet included in the standard kitchen, but they believed that freezing might become a preservation method used in the future, so the need for kitchen space for such functions would probably increase.\(^\text{12}\) By 1964, it was clear that *Allt i Hemmet* had been right in promoting frozen food, and *God bostad* changed its text: “In view of the rapidly growing consumption of industrially frozen produce and the use

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Ikea.

\(^\text{11}\) Birgitta Ek, “Att klara hemmet nu och för 20 år sedan... Tänk – vilken skillnad!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 9, no. 7 (1964): 44-48. She also remarked that she had had home help twenty years ago, which was not available in 1964.

of freezing as a home-preservation method, an upright cabinet freezer or space and wall socket are to be desired.”

The new household technology was a prevalent theme in *Allt i Hemmet* in the 1960s and helped to popularize research conducted by the Consumer Institute. The magazine had reported from the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair on the futuristic dream kitchen in the *Maison électrique*, which had the miraculous American electronic microwave oven, fully automatic dishwasher and washing machine, freezer, a stove that managed itself, and an advanced so-called program cooker. Under headings such as “Shall we do the dishes the American way?” and “Drama around an automatic machine,” Sunesson borrowed appliances and tested them in her own household. What had been presented as a miraculous automatic stove, which through a timer would cook the meal while she was at work, resulted in humorous descriptions of her worries at work: would the pea casserole boil over? What if the food was still not ready when the family came home? In conclusion, Sunesson continued her propagation of more processed food, along with

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13 Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, *God bostad* (1964), 20. Swedish text: “Med hänsyn till den hastigt ökande konsumtionen av industrifrysta produkter och användningen av frysning som hemkonserveringsmetod är det ett önskemål att frysskåp eller plats och uttag för sådant anordnas.” Statistics confirmed the development, as the consumption of frozen produce increased from 0.2 kilos per person in 1951 to 10 kilos in 1967, another sign that there was a significant change in consumption and household habits in the 1950s and 1960s. Carin Boalt and Marit Neymark, “Mat var dag – ett kvinnogöra,” in *Den okända vardagen – om arbetet i hemmen*, Brita Åkerman et al. (Stockholm: Förlaget Akademilitteratur AB, 1983), 132.

14 In the 1950s, there had been advertisements in *Allt i Hemmet* for washing machines, refrigerators, and freezers since 1956 (from 1957 on dishwashers were included), and there had been articles explaining how a freezer works in 1956 along with a test of an ironing machine and a hobby machine. In 1957, there had been more discussion of freezers, and in 1958 tests of sewing machines and washing machines were described. In December of the following year, Birgit Sunesson asked “Shall we buy a dishwasher?” since a few cheaper ones had just become available on the Swedish market; she concluded that one saves time, but also that the machines require space and cause some irritation, and that the user still needed to wash the pots, pans, etc., by hand. She was thus not too enthusiastic. Birgit Sunesson, “Ska vi köpa diskmaskin?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 4, no. 12 (1959): 42-44.

15 Lena Larsson, “...om 50 år?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 3, no. 9 (1958): 18-22.
cheaper and better food in cans, bags, and frozen packages. The theme of simplification remained prevalent throughout these observations.

In 1960, the dishwasher was still a luxury for most households in Sweden, and the Consumer Institute investigated the models available on the Swedish market. Following the Taylorized scientific approach from the days of the HFI, the institute had clocked each phase of loading and unloading the tested machines, concluding that the dishwashers both left dishes adequately clean and saved time. Sunesson shared the example of “the dinner dishes of five people, which a very fast homemaker could wash by hand in 10 minutes—or someone slightly less quick in 15 minutes—could be completed in 2.5–4 minutes with a dishwasher.” Even though the investigation had been published in Råd & Rön, according to Sunesson in her article, she had a pedagogical role in sharing the results in a popular way to a broader readership. Making such a text more appealing, she added personal remarks about people who said they like doing dishes because it gave them time to think while doing them. Having used a couple of American dishwashers herself, she concluded that “they made household work a lot more fun.” Therefore, she hoped that “the exclusive machine eventually would become ‘the people’s machine’ and everyone’s property.”

16 Birgit Sunesson, “Drama kring automat,” Allt i Hemmet 5, no. 12 (1960): 22-25. Birgitta Ek conducted a similar experiment in 1962, also concluding that such cooking could cause food poisoning and that it worked best for old-fashioned, complicated cooking, i.e., the opposite of the liberation that was the purpose of the automatic stove. Birgitta Ek, “Vi provar ‘fjärrstyrd’ matlagning,” Allt i Hemmet 7, no. 8 (1962): 34-37, 62.
17 Birgit Sunesson, “Ska vi diska amerikanskt?,” Allt i Hemmet 5, no. 6 (1960): 88-89. The American dishwashers in the Consumer Institute’s survey cost from around 2,000 kronor, which was expensive at the time, whereas the countertop dishwasher offered by Electrolux cost 729 kronor, but required at least 50 cm of counter space, according to the article. In 1960, a month’s salary for a male industrial worker was circa
Selling the Dishwasher as a Modern Convenience

Judging from contemporary advertisements, the dishwasher was an appliance to wish for, and a gendered object at the time, promoted with both similar and different arguments by American and Swedish producers. (Figs. 7.1-2) Two typical advertisements from Allt i Hemmet in 1961 illustrate a difference in consumer engineering from an American and Swedish perspective, in which the Swedish is influenced by the rhetoric of state agencies as intermediaries between producers and consumers in the market-making process.18

Both advertisements emphasized that a husband could make his wife really happy by giving her a dishwasher, and the boring chore of washing up could be transformed into something easy and fun. It was understood that the man had the income—and therefore the buying power. “The most welcome man in the world ...” was the heading of an advertisement for the American producer Kenwood, which depicted a man happily picking up a dishwasher from the trunk of his car; in the house, his wife peered out the window as she stood by a sink full of dirty dishes, which was crossed out by a big red X. The American producer argued that the dishwasher should be the next purchase for the home because it was family-oriented, and actually husband-oriented: “Then your wife


18 See Faust, “Consumer Engineering.”
will get more time to spend with you and the children and you will be able to enjoy a cozy, happy family life together, which means infinitely so much more ...“\(^{19}\)

In contrast, the Swedish producer Electrolux had chosen a more scientific approach, in line with arguments seen in the promotion of standardized kitchens and well-researched beds since the 1950s. Here it was not about family happiness or spending more time with the husband. Instead, the selling point was ergonomics and hygiene: “Your wife spares her back and her hands. . . . From a hygienic standpoint, the result will be better than before as the machine can work with really hot water.” The headline of an Electrolux advertisement assured the viewer that, “There is joy in labor here ...” while a smiling woman takes out a shining plate from the dishwasher and the young girl next to her looks equally happy holding a bowl. Further illustrating a pragmatic, ideal Swedish married life, the copy ended: “Do not wait to purchase until her next birthday. Your wife is actually worth getting an Electrolux dishwasher today.”\(^{20}\)

Another example also shows that Swedish producers used the same type of quasi-scientific arguments as official institutions in their advertisements. An advertisement for stainless steel in the kitchen claimed, “A modern homemaker demands the same standard of hygiene as a doctor, the same level of durability as an engineer, and the same beauty as


an architect.” 21 Such copy confirmed the Swedish ideal of a homemaker as a professional, a rational expert in her workspace in the kitchen.

A slight indication that the gender roles in household work were changing, just as Sunesson had called for in the 1960 Allt i Hemmet, was an advertisement from 1963 for a washing machine in which no person was visible, just the machine. As it was a fully automatic washing machine that managed the laundry by itself, the copy suggested that the homemaker could go shopping or to a coffee party: “All she needs to do is to put the clothes in the machine, add detergent, and choose a punch card. (And it is not even sure she does that. Her husband manages to do it equally well.) Then the machine takes care of the rest.” 22 The fact that the text was so gendered showed that it was still considered unusual for a husband to take part in ordinary household tasks. Like Sunesson, the copy further suggests that men would do more if there were machines involved, and when the tasks became easy.

By 1970, the typical male gender role had changed in advertising representations. Ethnologist Ulrika Torell shows that the man in the armchair—so typical of the idea of a bourgeois home in the 1950s—can no longer just sit there in the 1970s while his wife does all the work. In the advertisement from 1970, he can relax in his armchair because it just takes a minute to do the laundry, as he only needs to push a button. While the

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representation of male activity ultimately remained the same, the social expectations, and
the technology, changed.23

The Myth of Convenience

Did these machines, however, make household work so much easier and faster, and
did the new technology fulfill the expectations that Allt i Hemmet expressed in the early
1960s and that the Consumer Institute tested so thoroughly? When Carin Boalt, former
research leader at the HFI, summarized the studies on household work conducted from
1937 to 1976, she concluded that changing technology did not contribute to any
pronounced shortening of time spent on household tasks. The work around daily meals
generally took most of the time, and even though households used more industrially
produced food (which Allt i Hemmet had promoted), they spent more time on cooking
time-consuming meals to freeze. Although the dishwasher was not yet in wide use at the
time of these studies, Boalt noted that the Consumer Institute’s studies still showed that
the time gained through the use of a dishwasher was not particularly significant. Rather,
the most important change was the higher level of hygiene and comfort it provided.24

The task that had changed the most was laundry, which had become faster and easier
with electric washing machines. On the other hand, Boalt concluded that increasing

23 Ulrika Torell, “Mannen i fåtöljen: Om mannen, kvinnan och hemmet i svensk veckopress mellan 1950
och 1970,” in Visuella spår: Bilder i kultur- och samhällsanalys, ed. Anna Sparrman, Ulrika Torell, and Eva
Ährén Snickare (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2003), 93-94.
24 Boalt, “Tid för hemarbete,” 58-59. Carin Boalt was the sister of Brita Åkerman, who had initiated the
HFI, and Boalt was its research leader during its twelve years of existence. In 1964, Boalt became the chair
of the Building Functional Analysis in Lund, the first woman to be appointed professor at a technical
university in Sweden. Arne Kaijser and Ulrika Sax, A Tribute to the Memory of Brita Åkerman 1906-2006
demands on hygiene and a rich variety of textile materials requiring different treatment somewhat negated the time gained by washing machines. In view of this, the Swedish research arrived at similar results to that conducted in America. Ruth Schwartz Cowan argued that, in the U.S., the increasing amount of household technology went hand in hand with increasing demands for hygiene and perfection, which, in the end, meant even more work for women. Schwartz Cowan argues against the view that household technology and the time gained by using such technology would have made it possible for the married woman to be employed outside the home. On the contrary, it was the increasing time spent on paid work outside the home that forced women to spend less time on household work. This is the same conclusion that Joann Vanek draws from her sociological research. For women working at home, the time spent on domestic labor did not change from the 1920s to the 1970s, due to increased expectations and new tasks.

Research by Anita Nyberg confirms that these American findings are applicable to the Swedish case. The availability of household technology and ready-made goods to buy did not significantly decrease the amount of household work from the 1930s to the 1980s, but physical labor became easier and our expectations for convenience and an improved standard of living have increased. The type of household work also changed from the 1930s to the 1980s. Nyberg, in line with Vanek, concluded that technology had not

liberated women. The concept of the Swedish standard kitchen, however, was not based on household technology. Instead, its point was the rational arrangement of countertops, cabinets, sink, and stove that would make household work physically easier and more efficient, not electric appliances and other technology.

**Toward a Larger Kitchen**

The new kitchen standard of December 1961 raised the height of the sink to 90 cm and widened the cleaning cupboard to 80 cm. As welcome as these changes were, *Allt i Hemmet* complained that the dimensions settled on by the architects and construction companies were often just the minimum required. Although hesitant to refer to America as an example—as badly planned kitchens could also be found there—Sunesson concluded that the spaciousness of American kitchens gave them a sense of being rooms unto themselves, a feature that differed from Swedish kitchens.

By 1964, *God bostad* had met the demands and allowed more space for activities such as eating, baking, and more counter space next to the stove. The set minimum number of square meters was gone. The text made clear that there should be enough

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28 Birgit Sunesson, “Med nya mått mätt,” *Allt i Hemmet* 7, no. 1 (1961): 40-44. She also expressed her critique to the lack of space in 6,000 new kitchens by HSB, defending larger kitchens. Birgit Sunesson, “Vad gör man i ett kök?,” 58-63. The kitchens discussed were an experiment where HSB had tried to build two-bedroom apartments in the space of an ordinary one-bedroom apartment, and the architect acknowledged the problems faced by this design, saying that they “plan for more spacious kitchens in the future, with sewing workspace and space for a dishwasher.” See also Birgitta Ek, “De ynkliga köken,” *Allt i Hemmet* 8, no. 11 (1963): 13.


space in the kitchen for a table that could expand to seat at least eight people in apartments with bedrooms for four or more people; in smaller family apartments, six was acceptable.\textsuperscript{31} Eight people sitting comfortably in the kitchen was a great change from the drawings of six seats in the 1960 God bostad and three or five in 1954. Having promoted larger kitchens for years, in 1964 Allt i Hemmet proclaimed their “thanks for kitchens that are bigger” and pride in their achievement, including a facsimile of their first 1956 article on the large family kitchen.\textsuperscript{32}

There were many reasons why the housing board made the kitchens larger. Having researched the use of the all-room by the inhabitants in the experimental housing of Baronbackarna in Örebro, architect Lennart Holm concluded that they wanted larger kitchens with spacious dining areas. The larger size of the average apartment in the late 1950s also contributed to this demand, according to Holm.\textsuperscript{33} Architect Jöran Curman took the lead in drawing apartments with spacious dining area in the kitchens, which turned out to be popular for all kinds of activities, according to housing investigations. As Holm pointed out, people brought in looms and carpenter’s benches and liberated the living room from the dining table, which was being moved out of the living room by the presence of the TV.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. This was in Hässelby strand outside Stockholm. Jöran Curman then developed the design and wins the next big competition in Örebro, Varberga, and his type of kitchen gets many followers. Ibid.
The 1964 *God bostad* encouraged a lifestyle that was more casual, even for entertaining. In comparison to the previous version from 1960, there was no word about the need for a dining area for “Sunday dinners” and for guests. (See fig. 4.14) On the contrary, the 1964 *God bostad* stated: “The need for a dining set in the living room will perhaps diminish as the everyday eating area is given more space and a cozier atmosphere [in the kitchen].” Along with *Allt i Hemmet*, the Co-op had instilled such practical and informal values in their 1962 setting-up-home book *Sätta bo*, as Inger and Lasse would invite their guests to sit and eat in the kitchen at the expandable teak table instead of in the living room. The 1965 Ikea catalog also promoted *God bostad’s* message, showing “a well-planned dining alcove for weekends as well as weekdays” with a blue vernacular kitchen couch. (Fig. 7.3) Further popularizing the official guidelines of *God bostad*, *Allt i Hemmet* emphasized that “instead of having a bulky ‘fine dining place’ in the living room, one can invite the guests to eat in the kitchen—now around a spacious table—and enjoy comfortable chairs even on weekdays.”

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37 Möbel-Ikea, *Katalog 1965* (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 260. Swedish text: “En välplanerad matvrå för helg och söcken.” Otherwise, Ikea presented nothing new regarding kitchen interiors, but in 1962, for the first time, they featured a color image of a complete Ikea Pax kitchen, painted in blue, presenting it as very popular and designed according to the measurements of Swedish standards, SIS. Möbel-Ikea, *Katalog 1962*, 174. In 1963–67, Ikea did not include kitchen interiors in the catalog, just kitchen furniture; however, the cupboards and other built-in furniture might have been included in a separate catalog from their sister company, Hemservice, an independent company that sold household machines and goods from Philips, Rörstrand, Elektrohelios, Perstorp among others, according to the 1965 Ikea catalog, 258. Hemservice was also briefly mentioned in the 1960 Ikea catalog. Regarding kitchen furniture, Ikea presented the VDN declaration covering most kitchen furniture as news in the 1963 catalog, 214.  
such as “bulky” and “fine dining,” the magazine further discouraged any aspirations for a dining set in the living room. Absent from this discussion was the word “taste,” although that concept was still implied through “correct” consumption to promote an ideal lifestyle in a normative way.

The Role of Television in Changing the Kitchen and the Living Room

Although Allt i Hemmet’s eager promotion of larger kitchens had contributed to the discussion, there was the major change caused by the advent of television. By enlarging the kitchen space in the 1964 God bostad, the housing board considered how to coordinate television with other functions in the dwelling: “In the future, perhaps the daily social activities could be divided into two spaces—for example a living room and an enlarged kitchen/all-room—so that watching television does not block other occupations.”

Allt i Hemmet had raised the problem of television as early as 1960, where Sunesson observed that many women had started closing the door to the living room when television programs started in the evening, as they had other things to do—mending clothes and ironing or knitting and embroidery. She writes that, “In the old days, they [the women] listened to the radio while doing handicrafts. Now they are supposed to just sit and stare. That is more than they can bear.”

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young and special in Sweden that people felt it required the full attention of everyone seated in the living room, which was the normal place for the TV set. Sunesson further noted the power of television: “More and more people move the radio to the kitchen or a bedroom, so as to break down a great deal of the dictatorship of TV.” Consequently, to have a larger kitchen facilitated the division of activities in the home. What Lena Larsson and Marianne Fredriksson had been propagating in Allt i Hemmet since 1956—the large family kitchen with room for activities—was finally, if hesitantly, promoted by the national authority in 1964.

Small changes, sometimes just a few words, can eventually create a larger shift. Such is the transformation of the role of the living room in relation to the expanding kitchen. While the 1954 and 1960 God bostad stated that the living room “shall be” the central gathering place of the family, the 1964 God bostad changed the wording to “might be.” In this way, the housing board lowered the prevailing expectation, accepted for decades, that the living room should be the focal point for all the family’s daily activities. In the 1954 and 1960 editions of God bostad, the board observed that the living room often becomes the evening room for the parents, where the children are not allowed. In 1964, the board no longer claims that the intended activities of the living room are crammed into other spaces. The arrival of television strengthened the role of the living room as an evening room. This also implies that the housing board did not have its

lyssnade de på radio och handarbetade samtidigt. Nu ska de bara sitta och stirra. Det är mer än vad de står ut med.”
own agenda, but rather followed the results of investigations into how people really used different rooms. In the 1950s, *Allt i Hemmet* had promoted the large family kitchen for daily activities and the parlor as a place to which the adults could withdraw. In this way, the 1964 *God bostad* confirmed that the magazine defended and promoted issues close to people’s desires.

**Simplification and Informal Entertainment**

The tendency toward the simplification of household goods reflected changing habits. As entertainment became more informal and women increasingly entered the labor market to undertake paid work, the expectations for tableware also shifted. In the first half of the 1960s, *Allt i Hemmet*, the Bra bohag, and the Ikea catalogs sought to influence people’s behavior in a more informal direction, sometimes specifically teaching them how to host a dinner party, sometimes promoting easily moveable furniture to quickly transform the living room. Even Bra bohag took part in the promotion of a more informal lifestyle: showing a teak sideboard with Karin Björquist’s sturdy moss-green *Vardag* (“everyday”) plates and plain glasses, the publication encouraged a more informal way of entertaining: “Why not sometime put the dinner or late night supper there, so that each and every one may help themselves?”43 In comparison to the formal Sunday dinner promoted in the late 1950s, a glass bowl of shrimp, some bread, and a

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toaster on a table signified greater informality at mealtimes. (Fig. 7.4) Along the same lines of offering simple food to guests, Allt i Hemmet featured articles with recipes on how to hold a party with cheese—“a bold proposal”—or festive small sandwiches, including “fast pizza,” which must have been extremely modern in Sweden, where the first “pizzeria” did not open until the late 1960s.\footnote{Margit Engnes, “Bara en smörgås...,” Allt i Hemmet 7, no. 3 (1962): 58-61; Margit Engnes, “Fest med svensk ost...,” Allt i Hemmet 9, no. 2 (1964): 38-41, 88-89. According to the article, Sweden had in an instant become one of the leading “cheese nations,” producing nearly 200 different kinds of cheeses and sharing fourth place with Denmark in cheese consumption. There were also other articles on cheese, such as no. 4 (1960) and no. 5 (1962), and advertisements, such as no. 10 (1964) from the national association of dairies: “Cheese for a whole evening. A bold proposal: Serve cheese as the main course. With trimmings, something good to drink—nothing more. But lots. Do you dare try it out? Not everyone entertains with such refinement.” Swedish text: “Ost för en hel kväll. Ett djärvt förslag: Bjud på ost som huvudrätt. Med tillbehör, något gott att dricka till – inget mer. Men rikligt. Vågar Ni försöket? Inte vem som helst bjuder så raffinerat.”} Ikea even suggested informal dining in front of the fireplace, where a tea trolley was set with wine, baguette, grapes, and other snacks.\footnote{Möbel-Ikea, Katalog 1965, 18. It was the first time the Ikea catalog featured food.} The magazine and furniture catalogs heralded a new era of informality and unpretentiousness in everyday life.

Having the same glasses, plates, and flatware for both everyday and festive occasions, according to the magazine’s practical advice, helped to underscore the ideal of a wholesome, unpretentious lifestyle in line with reasonable consumption. The various actors, whether official institutions or commercial companies, spread the same message of encouraging more informality and simplification. In comparison to the 1950s, the advice was basically the same; here, though, it was even stronger in its emphasis on plain china for both everyday use and entertainment, on stainless steel and utensils that were easy to handle.\footnote{The 1965 Bosättning went the furthest in this regard, including a checklist for the user-friendliness of}
saving” casseroles and ovenproof dishes that could go directly from the stove to the table, while still “looking nice!” As Allt i Hemmet had done in 1956, the Co-op’s Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin rejected the complete dinner service, using positive words, such as “progress” and stating “that it is more fun to pick out the assortment according to one’s own desire.” While acknowledging that the superior design of Swedish china and glassware awakens desire, she urged the reader “not just to buy what pleases the eye, as it is also about acquiring a basic assortment that is truly useful.” These arguments reflected the juxtaposition between the waster and the saver (who we met in chapter six).

The ideal of choosing a basic set of china was spreading, and by 1963 Gustavsberg stopped selling packaged 58-piece dinner services. Aiming at creating reasonable consumers, the consumer guidance literature of the early 1960s taught “correct” consumption, reminiscent of earlier taste-making efforts.

objects: they presented drawings to demonstrate problems, such as a wobbly coffee cup, as Allt i Hemmet had in 1959, and a knob on a lid that was hard to grab. Krantz-Jensen, Bosättning (1965), 47. Bra bohag’s book had similar questions to check regarding the handling of cups, plates, glasses, etc. Bo Gunnar Lindgren, “Duka ett vackert bord,” in Bo bättre, trivas mera en handbok utgiven av Bra bohag, ed. Ulf Hård af Segerstad, Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin, and Sven Staaf (n.p.: Bra bohag, 1963), 118.

Kooperativa Förbundet, Tillsammans kring bordet, n.p. Swedish text: “Att kunna sätta grytan eller det ugnsfasta fetet direkt på bordet är både tids- och arbetsbesparande. Maten hålls lättare varm – och det ser trevligt ut!” See also Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962), 80; Ek and Larsson, “Vi gifter oss,” 3. Both sources suggested two such dishes and the flameproof Terma pot, made of a new material invented by Gustavsberg in a competition for NASA that they won. Allt i Hemmet also featured a consumer guidance article about new pots and dishes, explaining the concepts of ovenproof, fireproof, etc. Sten Landeström, “Titta den höll!,” Allt i Hemmet 7, no.2 (1962): 20-22, 50-51. Highlighting multipurpose selections, the Co-op pointed out that such dishes could also be used as a cheese board or for fruit or cookies. Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962), 80.

Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962), 77. Swedish text: “framsteg” and “men nog är det betydligt roligare att plocka ihop sitt förråd som man vill.”

Ibid. Swedish text: “Det gäller förstås inte bara att köpa vad ögonen frestas av, det gäller också att få ihop ett basförråd som blir verkligt användbart.” Also Bra bohag emphasized the importance of function over aesthetics, supported the acquisition of a basic set of the most practical types of household objects. Lindgren, “Duka ett vackert bord,” 117. Like the advice regarding furniture, the books typically also include facts about different materials and their quality.

Åke Livstedt, conversation with author October 17, 2014.
The rational tone of the Co-op is revealed in questions such as: “What do you say about the proposal to choose seating furniture with such straight, simple lines that they may be easily fitted with loose coverings of washable cotton fabric?” and “What do you say about the proposal to get a basic supply of plates in all white china?”51 Such taste-making efforts may well be compared to the late nineteenth-century efforts to teach people that decorated plates are not fit for their purpose and offer poor vehicles to serve food properly.52 In a Co-op brochure on table settings, eight out of nine images of different meals depicted an ascetic choice of plates in plain white, monochrome, or Spisa ribb with some stripes on the rim. Stig Lindberg’s decorated Berså plate was incidentally covered by a plain white plate for the starter.53 Plain white and discreet, the ideal china for everyday use and for parties suited an ideal of rational consumption. (Figs. 7.5-6)

Finally, the 1965 Bosättning followed the Co-op, Bra bohag, and Allt i Hemmet ideal: “White plates will give the greatest possibility to vary the table setting.”54 None of these books spoke of white or monochrome china as more “tasteful,” instead emphasizing the practicality of combining things in different ways. In this, however, there are implied rules of what may well be interpreted as better taste, even though they do not use the word overtly. The freedom to mix and match without the compulsion to lay out a

51 As an addendum to Sätta bo, the Co-op produced a ten-page “guide for reflections and discussions at home” with questions in different sections of the book to discuss before the purchase. Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo: En handledning, 7, 10. Swedish text: “Vad säger ni om förslaget att välja sittmöbler med så enkla raka former att de lätt kan förses med lösa överdrag av tvättbart bomullstyg? Vad säger ni om förslaget att skaffa ett basförråd av tallrikar i helt vitt porslin?”
54 Krantz-Jensen, Bosättning (1965), 47. Swedish text: “Vardagsutrustningen ska duga också i festligare sammanhang. . . . Vita tallrikar ger största möjligheten att välja omväxlande tillbehör till dukningen.”
complete dinner service does not become as free as one might think if the presented ideal is plain white or monochrome. In other words, “correct” consumption as promoted in these publications was practical, thrifty, and ascetic.

Reducing the number of household goods followed the ideal of simplification. Henrikson-Abelin was clear in her selection, choosing a white plate that could work for starters both with the everyday and festive meals as well as with the coffee cups as a side plate. Regarding coffee cups, she questioned why people bought two kinds, one for the everyday and one, more expensive, cup for festive occasions: “But why?—if one chooses a cup with a pure and simple form of strong porcelain, it is unnecessary to buy double sets.” Instead of also buying teacups, one could practice greater economy in buying an all-round-type of cup, which also Allt i Hemmet suggested. The Co-op and the magazine also encouraged simplifying the table’s glassware by choosing one straight and one rounder glass that could be used on all occasions. Henrikson-Abelin admitted, however, that it was more fun to have a luxurious glass on a foot of real crystal for special occasions, suggesting this style for the wish list. Bosättning was a bit more generous, recommending three sizes of glasses, including a small for snaps or liqueur.

The tendency toward simplification and eating in the kitchen did not mean carelessness, however: Allt i Hemmet continued to emphasize an ideal of neatness. Under

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55 Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962), 77-78. Swedish text: “Men varför det – om man väljer en kopp med ren och enkel form av ett starkt porslin, är det väl onödigt att köpa dubbel uppsättning.” Bra bohag also suggested just two sizes of plates, as the smaller could be used as a side plate and for desserts. Lindgren, “Duka ett vackert bord,” 120-121.

56 Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962), 78; Ek and Larsson, “Vi gifter oss,” 3.


58 Krantz-Jensen, Bosättning (1965), 47.
the heading “It costs so little,” Lena Larsson and her colleagues encouraged readers to make a simple, everyday family dinner in gloomy November into a moment of relaxation and peace.\textsuperscript{59} To illustrate what they meant, they showed two images of the same kitchen table set for dinner. (Fig. 7.7) In the first image, the table is set carelessly, the flatware sloppily placed on top of the plate, the crispbread and milk still in their original packaging. There is no tablecloth, no napkins, no flowers, no lamp above the table. The other picture showed a small table with a yellow lamp spreading warm light, a green tablecloth and matching napkins, flowers, a place mat under the child’s plate. The drinks were poured in their glasses, the rest, according to the caption, ready in a pitcher when needed. Acknowledging that many women came home stressed from work and did not feel they had time for this—or could afford the effort for that matter—the article emphasized the importance of “kindness, warmth, light, and care” in “our own little world” at home, that creating a well-considered, cozy atmosphere would be noticed, at least unconsciously, by the husband and child.\textsuperscript{60}

These tips on creating a warm atmosphere with lighting and thoughtful details resemble the way Larsson and her colleagues usually described the home of Karin and Carl Larsson, repeatedly featured in \textit{Allt i Hemmet} as well as in the book \textit{Heminredning}. To reaffirm that the neatness did not cause much extra work, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} suggested a tablecloth of synthetic fiber that could go in the washing machine and did not need to be

\textsuperscript{59} Lena Larsson, Marguerite Walfridsson, and Ove Eckhardt, “Det kostar så lite,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 8, no. 11 (1963): 26-29.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 26-28. Swedish text: “Vår egen lilla värld måste ta emot oss med vänlighet, värme, ljus och omsorg.”
ironed. There were also drawings of how to fold a napkin, of cloth or paper, in a simple way, as “those days are gone when the napkin should be folded according to the rules,” thus another sign of simplification along with neatness.61

A Flexible Living Room for Leisure and Entertainment

More informal ways of entertaining required more flexible living rooms to accommodate modern family life. Synthesizing the new attitudes from the first half of the 1960s, *Allt i Hemmet* promoted a completely flexible living room in 1964, one that was easily changeable from dinner to dancing, watching television, or doing hobbies. (Figs. 7.8-9) In emphasizing the fluidity of the living room and a casual way of entertaining guests, the article seemed to build on Larsson’s description of the Svedberg home in 1957. The family described in 1964 was a “modern, active family” with many interests. They “like to spontaneously invite their friends for a toasted sandwich, a glass of red wine, and a quiet twist.”62 Assuming more leisure time, more money, and more energy for travelling and hobbies like home movies or photography, the article talks about “the new, rich leisure time” and “Friday evenings with lighthearted, late-night, improvised parties. That is how the young families live today and tomorrow nearly half of our population will live this way.”63

61 Ibid., 28-29. “Borta är väl tiden då servetten skulle brytas efter konstens alla regler.”
63 Ibid. Swedish text: “Den nya, rika fritiden, långa vinterkvällar, soliga sommareftermiddagar och fredagskvällar med sorglösa, nattsena improviserade parties. Så lever de unga familjerna i dag och i morgon nästan halva vårt folk.”
Through text and drawings, the magazine showed how the family employed flexible and light furniture to fit their lifestyle. Folding and rolling tables, chairs that moved between the kitchen and the living room when needed, and folding chairs could be rearranged to watch television, listen to the stereo (a novelty at the time), take away the table and carpet to start dancing, or bring the sewing machine and board games to the table. While sharing ideas of easy entertainment at home, a key difference from the furniture catalogs and advertisements was the warning against “the clumsy seating group, a heavy sideboard that holds nothing or an impressive chandelier giving poor light.” 64

Indeed, we have returned to the critiques found in the advisory literature and Allt i Hemmet, where the couch and conventional ways of choosing furniture to display one’s wealth were deprecated while so much else in the home had become light and easily managed.

**Wholesome Coffee Drinking and Knitting**

In addition to watching television, the seating group in the living room remained a focus for idealized visions of social coffee drinking and knitting. Under the heading “we make it comfortable for us,” Bra bohag in 1961–1962 featured friends seated around the coffee table in the living room, enjoying coffee and properly seated in a setting much like what would have been the norm in the 1950s. 65 (Figs. 7.10, 4.8 and 4.10)


an upholstered couch with visible wooden legs and a couple of upholstered armchairs of
different kinds—also with fairly straight lines and with wooden legs—placed around a
teak coffee table (the same as one depicted in 1959–1960). The coffee cups are white,
with some bold color at the bottom and on the saucer, but the general palette is white, as
prescribed by contemporary advisory literature. The two men are properly dressed in dark
suits, ties, and white shirts with cufflinks, one of them with highly polished black shoes;
both display good posture, even though the setting is informal.

In the following images, the room is the same, but the woman is knitting, as in the
representations from the 1950s, and the man is typically reading about cars in the
newspaper. This had been an ideal image of a casual evening at home since the 1950s,
and the same scenario is featured on the cover of Bra bohag’s Bo bättre, trivas mera from
1963: man with newspaper, woman knitting, and cups on the coffee table. (Fig. 7.11)

Ethnologist Ulrika Torell has studied the “man in the armchair” as a typical
representation in newspapers and popular magazines from the 1950s and 1960s, noting
this type as an example of how values change in society. The man, the provider, has his
position in the armchair, which stands for relaxation and passiveness after a day at paid
work, whereas the woman is always up and running to do things in the home. It was not
until the 1960s that women could just sit—but only if they deserved it. In Torell’s
example, women sit if they have been prudent homemakers, saving money to buy their
own armchair, but they are still not allowed to just sit and relax: they must knit and
therefore produce something. This dynamic could also be seen within the context of rational consumption, in which thrift and the idea of making things is a form of ideal consumer behavior. The images in the Bra bohag catalog and setting-up-home book indicate the ideal of wholesome neatness for a couple living up to their typical gender roles represented in the advisory literature and furniture catalogs.

**Glamorous Entertaining**

In contrast to the tableau of wholesome knitting and coffee drinking, there was a more glamorous type of informal entertainment appearing in advertisements in *Allt i Hemmet* in the 1960s. Dressed-up adults drink alcohol and the women are seen smoking. The Dux company, a manufacturer of upholstered furniture that was part of the Bra bohag group, also promoted a glamorous image of friends drinking, perhaps brandy, along with coffee: “Evening with guests—more festive, luxurious, with two couches, of course! More comfortable as well.”\(^{67}\) (Fig. 7.12) The point here was to promote the idea of having two couches instead of the usual single couch and two armchairs. The image of the “evening at home” showed the man and the woman each leisurely lying on their own couch: he is still reading a newspaper, per the type, while she, instead of knitting, can relax with a book while eating fruit. In another example, a representation of this informal lifestyle—just as neat and glamorous—shows a woman on a couch while the man lights

\(^{66}\) Torell, “Mannen i fåtöljen,” 79-95.  
her cigarette. (Fig. 7.13) Both are dressed up, he in gray suit, she in sleeveless dress and golden pumps, her legs exposed. A fashion magazine lies nearby on the coffee table. 68

In advertising for the Royal System storage and shelving series, adult friends entertain themselves in the living room, illustrating a more glamorous and urbane social life akin to the Ikea cocktail cabinet. (See fig. 6.16) A man in a dark blue suit proudly shows off his cocktail cabinet, which he has opened so that everyone can see the bottles, glasses, and cigarettes inside. Adding to the modern flair, a Danish teak ice bucket is placed underneath. The cabinet is part of the Royal System shelves, which cover a large section of the living room wall and include some books, a coffee set, glasses, and a couple of wooden birds (one of which looks like the typical crane made in sloyd in school). Instead of coffee, the elegantly dressed women and the man seated at the coffee table are drinking red wine. One of the women smokes a cigarette.

The advertisements reflect a change in representations of smoking and drinking in the early 1960s. American tobacco companies at the time were introducing lifestyle-oriented advertisements that portrayed smokers—both men and women—as successful, elegant, and happy; this approach was quite different from Scandinavian advertisements, which had earlier focused on the product itself. 69 By showing women drinking wine, the ad pushes further beyond norms of the time, where coffee drinking embodied a typically

68 “Lejonmattan Gamlestadens” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 10, no. 10 (1965). Advertisements for wall-to-wall carpets began in 1963 in Allt i Hemmet, which conducted a test of such carpets in no. 10 (1965), indicating that they were becoming more common in this period. Lejonmattan was also advertised with dressed-up couples either on the carpet by the fireplace or about to kiss each other on the couch, under the English heading “modern living.”
wholesome Swedish ideal, itself a result of the strong temperance movement of the nineteenth century. Generally, beer and aquavit were the most common forms of alcohol consumed in the twentieth century, with wine overtaking hard liquor only in 1977; for the first time in that year, Swedes drank more wine than hard liquor.\textsuperscript{70}

In the \textit{Royal System} advertisement, the woman on the right (probably the hostess) with her elegantly coifed high hairdo smiles at the man by the cocktail cabinet. According to the text, this cabinet represents one of the many details in the \textit{Royal System} that marks the home as “more comfortable, liveable, and individual than in any other way.” These glamorous adults drinking and smoking around the cocktail cabinet express modern living for the younger generation setting up home: “The home where friends gather is unafraid of creating its own style rather than taking over the older one’s . . .”\textsuperscript{71}

These examples illustrate how advertisements showed another, more glamorous lifestyle than that presented in the general advisory literature: women are shown smoking and drinking alcohol, or just lying down without having anything practical at hand, relaxing with a book or a magazine. This was a drastic change from home scenes

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{70}Furthermore, in the 1970s, Systembolaget, the Swedish monopoly selling alcohol, launched a major campaign—\textit{Spola kröken}—to educate Swedes about wine in an effort to help them drink less hard liquor. The working class did not drink wine, and pejorative expressions such as \textit{rödvinsvänster} (“red-wine left”) and \textit{gåsleverproletariat} (“gooseliver proletariat”) for the young became common epithets for intellectual leftists of middle and upper classes who preferred to drink red wine in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, Systembolaget introduced wines from different countries for a broad audience, including simpler county wines. Håkan Larsson, a writer on wine and food, interviewed in the radio program \textit{Stil}, Swedish Radio P1, April 20, 2018.

\textsuperscript{71}“Royal system” advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 6, no. 11 (1961): 5, also in no. 3 (1962, and a version with teenagers dancing in no. 10 (1961) and no. 4 (1962). The bottom of the advertisement shows alternative features in the series: a cupboard for the record player, a desk, a shelf for the television, and a small writing surface. Swedish text: “mer trivsamt, mer beboeligt och mer individuellt än på något annat sätt. . . . Hemmet, som samlar vänerna är ett hem, som inte är rädd att skapa sin egen stil framför att övertaga de äldres . . .”
\end{flushright}
depicted in 1950s advertisements in *Allt i Hemmet*. Further, if we compare these later advertisements of 1964–1965, we note the emphasis on a sexier look, with exposed female legs along with a more casual way of sitting, rather than the straight backs and quiet coffee conversation in *Bra bohag* 1961–1962. Apart from the fact that they were advertisements, thus playing with more glamorous ideals, there were still indications that there was an ongoing change toward a more informal way of entertaining, not least in the way of sitting. In contrast to simplified cooking and informal dining in the kitchen, the advertisements feature exclusive upholstered seating groups—even two sofas—in which a woman might read a fashion magazine rather than knit. In spite of the seemingly hedonistic overtones of such consumption, as educated consumers they had made a rational decision by buying quality sofas that would offer a lifetime of use and enjoyment.

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72 Advertisements may be interpreted as active agents in cocreating new ideals, such as a more independent lifestyle for women, though for commercial rather than ideological reasons. See Leif Runefelt, *Den magiska spegeln: Kvinnan och varan i pressens annonser 1870-1914* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2019).
Chapter Eight

“Timeless Quality”: Reviving the Eighteenth Century and the Rural Past

The literature on home furnishings from the early 1960s frequently uses the word “timeless.” Encompassing an ideal of furniture as functional, durable, and well proportioned, timeless furnishings should, according to Lilly Arrhenius, last a lifetime: “One will soon get tired of the latest fashion, it is the timeless that will last.”1 This chapter traces the roots of the ideal of timelessness to the eighteenth-century Gustavian style and its manor house culture. Yet the elite connotations of the Gustavian were revived alongside rural peasant culture, which was understood in similar terms as eternal and timelessly Swedish. The mixture of these influences suited the early 1960s in Sweden, when hundreds of thousands of people were leaving the countryside for modern, rootless lives in the new suburbs. While modernity and rationality were the underlying values of the new housing production, these were never strictly enacted as a refusal of an older national past. Indeed, the modern designers who successfully integrated forms of the past with the needs and materials of the present were celebrated as exemplary figures.

The Roots of Timeless Swedish Tradition

The advisory publications all agreed on timelessness as an important ideal. The furniture company Bodafors, part of the Bra Bohag collaboration, had also published its

own brochure. Written by Gunnel Björkman, a setting-up-home consultant, the brochure issued “a warning against the whims of fashion” and instilled the importance of careful planning for purchases, according to need, underscoring that quality always pays off.² Sensible assessments of quality—understood in the terms of the VDN—were posed against fashion. Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin emphasized this message in the Co-op's Sätta bo: “It is sad if one happens to buy furniture that one quickly gets tired of. Furniture of simple and timeless design endures the best, for example Carl Malmsten’s furniture, which never seems to go out of date.”³ Therefore, the encouragement in the advisory publications to become an educated and rational consumer merged in a vision of setting up a home that was perceived as quintessentially Swedish.

A typical example was Inger and Lasse, who set up home according to a story made up by Henrikson-Abelin. Inger and Lasse had been together for some years but waited until marriage to set up an apartment, a sign of the housing shortage at the time. She worked as a hairdresser and he in a car repair shop, and they had saved 8,000 kronor to set up home, twice as much as the state setting-up-home loan. Typically, they had wisely chosen “timeless furniture of reliable quality.”⁴ They had not bought a complete seating group, but rather a small comfortable sofa called Samspel (Interplay) designed by

2 Gunnel Björkman, Så sätter vi bo (Bodafors: AB Svenska Möbelfabrikerna, 1960), 12-13. Swedish text: “En warning för modenycker passar bra i det här sammanhanget, tycker jag.” The interiors and captions were by Åke Hassbjer.
4 Ibid., 99. Swedish text: “Därför har de också försökt att välja möbler av tidlös typ och av pålitlig kvalitet, så gott det nu lyckats!” There were three newly started homes featured with a story, a plan of the apartment, and drawings or photographs: the newlywed couple Inger and Lasse in a 2.5-room apartment of 65 square meters, a couple and their baby in a two-bedroom apartment of 75 square meters, and two girlfriends sharing a one-bedroom apartment of 43 square meters, Ibid., 99-108.
Malmsten along with a couple of rattan armchairs. In this way, they could afford a comfortable, easily moveable Malmsten armchair as well, Farmor (Grandmother).\(^5\) The official setting-up-home brochure Bosättning, also proposed Malmsten’s Samspel as one of three couches suggested for a small apartment, along with a stick-back couch and one with wooden armrests.\(^6\) His furniture designs combined Swedish tradition with modern utility.

The roots of Malmsten’s living room furniture are to be found in the Swedish eighteenth century. In the drawing of the interior described as “timeless” in the Co-op book, we get to look in through the window at an inviting living room with a tea pot, cups, and cinnamon rolls ready on the coffee table. (Fig. 8.1) Decorative plants, such as cyclamen and hyacinth, and lightweight curtains frame the illustration. The rounded corners of Malmsten’s Hemmakvällar (Evenings at home) coffee table correspond to the rounded shape of his upholstered couch Fästfolket (The engaged) with its continuous curve from backrest through armrests. On the floor, there is a rya rug and striped rag rugs, also featured in Marianne Fredriksson’s story about the young couple setting up home, in which the young woman typically had made the rya herself.\(^7\) The wooden Malmsten floor lamp Staken has pressed wild flowers in the white paper shade, local natural forms literally suspended in time. On the other side of the lamp, we see


\(^6\) Krantz-Jensen, Bosättning (1965), 23.

\(^7\) Fredriksson, “Sätta bo utan lägenhet,” 33.
Malmsten’s cabinet from the suite *Talavid*. The tall cabinet has two compartments divided by two drawers and a surface to place things while bringing out silverware, linen, china, or whatever one keeps in the cabinet.

In its basic shape and function, this piece is reminiscent of vernacular cabinets from the rural region of Dalarna. With its fluted ornamentation on the cabinet doors and white-lacquered wooden surface, it also suggests the Swedish Gustavian style, a plain, pale-colored neoclassical style of furniture popular in the late eighteenth century. Malmsten, who was known for finding inspiration in vernacular and past traditions, had designed the dining sets *Talavid* and *Herrgården* in the 1950s. Available with light lacquer, they were inspired by the Swedish eighteenth-century manor house tradition. (Fig. 8.2)

The 1962 Ikea catalog conveyed the message of timelessness as the Co-op and Bra bohag books from the same time. In the introduction, Ikea presented the new collection—larger than ever—as “more of the timeless style,” in “an effort to make your home as current and modern after ten years as today.” To further instill the message of buying durable design, perhaps for a lifetime, the catalog featured a short article advising people how to set up home: “The new, more timeless design, which you find abundantly represented in this catalog, has the future before itself, and in general, it is wise to let the principal furniture have this timeless character.” The catalog then suggested adding

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8 Henrikson-Abelin, *Sätta bo* (1962), 25, 111. A similar cabinet is featured in a drawing in *Bo bättre, trivas mera* as an alternative to a modular shelving and storage system or a sideboard for the dining area, 63. It is from Carl Malmsten’s dining set *Herrgården*, launched in 1958 as *Ulfsparre*, produced by Bodafors.
10 Ibid., 22. Swedish text: “De nya mera tidlösa formerna, som Ni finner rikligt representerade i denna
smaller objects with character here and there, such as an inherited dresser, clock, or chair. The image of the “timeless” living room included chairs of the Thonet type, a light-lacquered sideboard, and a light blue, upholstered couch and easy chair with rounded backrests, not unlike the Malmsten one in the Co-op book. (Fig. 8.3) It is also similar to the light blue couch and easy chair that Allt i Hemmet’s interior designer had picked from the store Bodés, which is admiringly described as “the lavender blue couch that brings the thoughts to Malmsten himself, without having anything to do with him.”

There was thus something alluring about Malmsten’s designs. For Ikea, this enthusiasm for plain design provided an opportunity to move past historical revival styles, with the exception of the popular Gustavian style. In its introduction to the living room with Thonet chairs and Malmsten-like couch, the catalog stated: “The smiling, friendly living room. This is how the friends-of-timelessness decorate softly and invitingly—an example that one certainly does not need to have an eye on revival-style furniture to get that pleasantly timeless character that makes the home as current in ten years.”

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11 Ibid. Ingvar Kamprad wrote the texts himself until the early 1960s, according to Atle Bjarnestam, without being more specific of year. Atle Bjarnestam, *Ikea – design och identitet*, 29. By that time, architect Bengt Ruda and editor Brita Svenonius-Lang might have been involved as well.


13 Möbel-Ikea, *Katalog 1962*, 15. Swedish text: “Det leende, vänliga vardagsrummet. Så här mjukt inhjudande inredar tidlösa-vännerna – ett exempel på att man visst inte behöver snegla åt stilmöbelsidan för att få fram den där trivsamt tidlösa-karakteren, som gör hemmet lika aktuellt om tio år.” In the 1962 catalog, historic revival furniture was in the very back of the catalog, with the exception of the Gustavian dining set *Desirée* and a couple of Rococo dressers; of those that were featured, we find for example the seating group *Fransk rokoko* (French Rococo), the Haupt dresser, and chandeliers. The introductory text for this section speaks of how many people appreciate a connection with the past, through inherited pieces or something newly acquired, but that true copies of a style were difficult to use in a modern apartment with
There was a debate in the early 1960s, however, about long-term quality versus fashion in terms of furniture, where some warned against the decay of taste and others spoke of the need for furniture to be viewed as fashion, comparing it with the clothing industry, as Kerstin Wickman summarized in *Svenska möbler 1890-1990*. Rejecting fashion thinking, Erik Berglund promoted a great variety of furniture to meet the changing needs of different people and ages. Elias Svedberg, on the other hand, asked how long the furniture business could keep selling goods of perfect quality as once-in-a-lifetime investments, while the clothing industry had learned that goods will become worn and new, younger groups always develop their own ideals of consumption. In the advisory literature, however, the ideal for furniture was still that of timelessness.

In Bra bohag’s *Bo bättre, trivas mera*, design critic Rebecka Tarshys and interior designer Hedvig Tarschys-Block (now Hedqvist) noted the difference between the U.S. and Sweden on the issue of wear and tear while acknowledging that “there was something nice about the Americans’ radical way of shedding skin—to buy something new when one can afford it, when one moves to a new dwelling, when the taste of one’s

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14 Wickman, “Byggbart, utbytbart, flyttbart,” 324.
15 Ibid., 323-24. Wickman referred to a discussion in the furniture companies’ professional magazine *Möbelvärlden* 1960.
youth does not correspond to one’s new taste.”16 In Sweden, however, “buy and keep” will last for a long time, they thought, as “our need for quality is a heritage that we are proud of. To buy good things that last throughout the years give us satisfaction.”17 In this way, interior design experts of the time reflected on the Swedish ideal of timeless quality and referred to the current importance of consumer guidance.

“So Swedish in Its Style”

The ideal of timelessness linked to a specific historic past—and thereby to Swedishness—and for the first and only time the Ikea and Bra bohag catalogs highlighted that something was typically “Swedish.” Sources of inspiration were the eighteenth-century manor houses and the home of Karin and Carl Larsson in Sundborn in Dalarna, a Swedish version of a late nineteenth-century artist home. While one evoked a stable image of the landed gentry, the other conveyed a romantic ideal of artistic freedom, and both stood in contrast to contemporary bourgeois interiors. The 1962 Ikea catalog started its section of complete interiors exclaiming in the headline: “Isn’t this a lovely dining room, so light and airy, so Swedish in its style?” The text referred to a full-page image of a dining area with slim, pearl-gray dining chairs and table, along with a cabinet of the same type as in the Co-op’s Malmsten interior, but without the fluted details on the doors.


“(Fig. 8.4) “A beautiful exponent of the timeless style,” the catalog presented this “new lovely” furniture group Mårbacka by Bengt Ruda.\textsuperscript{18}

The interior reflects the interest in the Swedish eighteenth century, previously seen in the Gustavian-inspired dining sets and dressers launched by Ikea in the 1950s; the name Mårbacka derived from the well-known manor house and home of the Swedish author and Nobel laureate Selma Lagerlöf. Linking the design to manor house culture and the Larsson home, the catalog wondered: “Isn’t it just such a beautiful dining area what we all are longing for, we, who are cramped for space in a city apartment and eat at the kitchen table Monday through Saturday? The fine Swedish manor house atmosphere that Carl Larsson has depicted in his paintings, and that we particularly appreciate today, as we have had such brown and angular and objective things in our homes during the past decades.”\textsuperscript{19} In just a few sentences, the Ikea catalog managed to capture both a nostalgic longing for an idealized past, not least through the well-disseminated pictures by Larsson, at a time of persistent lack of housing and limited space. The style of writing, with its first person plural pronouns, further strengthens the appeal to the reader’s feelings: “Why would we not allow ourselves this if we find it beautiful and know that we can take


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. “Är det inte just ett sådant vackert matrum vi alla längtar efter, vi som är trångbudda i en stadsvåning och äter vid köksbordet från måndag till lördag? Den fina svenska herrgårdsstämning som Carl Larsson skildrat i sina tavlor och som vi idag uppskattar alldeles särskilt därför att vi haft det så brun och kantigt och sakligt i våra hem de senaste decennierna.” Further promoting furniture inspired by the eighteenth century, Ikea introduced in 1965 a white-lacquered furniture series for storage, shelving, and dining called Gripsholm, a Swedish royal castle with several Gustavian interiors. The catalog, however, did not say anything about “Swedish” this time. Möbel-Ikea, \textit{Katalog 1965}, 30-31, 108, 129. The following year, there was also a bedroom suite. Möbel-Ikea, \textit{Katalog 1966} (Älmhult: Ikea, n.d.), 29.
pleasure in it?" With Mårbacka, Ikea offered an opportunity to buy something modern yet traditional, something new that reminded of the past without being a complete suite of a made-up Gustavian style with fluted columns on the legs and other more obvious eighteenth-century details, like Desirée and other suites from Ikea.

A few years earlier, Bra bohag had also started speaking of a “Swedish style,” referring to the same type of manor house-inspired interior as in the 1962 Ikea catalog. It was Malmsten’s dining set Herrgården (the Manor House), which the Bra bohag catalog of 1959–1960 presented as “a good representative of the purely Swedish style.” (See fig. 8.2) It was a pearl-gray lacquered dining set with slender stick-back chairs, with or without armrests, along with a tall cabinet with eighteenth-century fluted details on the doors. The year before, when Bra bohag introduced the furniture suite in the catalog, it said nothing about Swedish style or any relation to past times, just that it was beautiful and designed by professor Carl Malmsten. The gray-lacquered pieces of furniture stood out as something different in comparison to the rest of the catalog with its teak, oak, walnut, and other, darker wooden sideboards, storage furniture, beds, chairs, and neat upholstered couches and armchairs with wooden legs and armrests. With the name Herrgården, the link to the Swedish eighteenth-century manor house style, which had also been in fashion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was affirmed.

20 Möbel-Ikea, Katalog 1962 Möbel-Ikea, 10. Swedish text: “varför skulle vi inte unna oss detta om vi finner det vackert och vet att vi skulle glädjas åt det?”
22 Bra bohag, Vi möblerar (1958), 11. At that time, the group was called Ulfsparre, but the noble family bearing this name wanted it changed, so the following year it was presented as Herrgården. In addition to the version of birch lacquered in gray-white depicted, the series was available in birch or mahogany.
Further emphasizing the importance of the Gustavian, the catalog presented Malmsten as having “connected with the atmosphere we associate with the finest of Swedish tradition. This is a style that is more current than it has been in a long time.”

The Bra bohag catalogs continued to emphasize this style in the early 1960s, employing Swedish eighteenth-century cultural heritage to promote a timeless ideal that would last for generations. Under the heading “Swedish tradition and culture,” the 1963–1964 Bra bohag catalog let Malmsten himself explain: “I have sought to intertwine a touch of the poetic Swedish nature with strains from the Swedish folk and manor house culture that still remains close to our heart.” He aimed at combining the past and current time by “synthesizing human and objective elements.” The quote accompanied a living room with the dining set Herrgården and storage unit Ulfåsa, as well as a bedroom with a dressing table and stiles on the bedstead, which the catalog text further connected to the Swedish tradition: “Is there anything as Swedish as Carl Malmsten’s furniture! He has refined our fine old manor house-style and gives his furniture that wonderful feeling of craftsmanship that lasts through all times.” While confirming that the furniture both suited the modern dwelling in scale and was linked to the traditional past, the catalog emphasized the ideal of timelessness: “the coming generation will show with pride

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Bodafors furniture designed by Carl Malmsten." The ideal was, therefore, to buy furniture that could last both in terms of quality and style, but that would also please the next generation.

Furniture suites inspired by Gustavian design—especially white-lacquered ones—enjoyed a revival in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but they had also been popular early in the century. In addition to Malmsten’s furniture for Bodafors in the Bra bohag catalogs, Ikea promoted white-lacquered dining furniture as well as bedroom suites. As a highlight inside the cover in the 1962 catalog, Ikea sold the bedroom suite Hemsö as “a nice old Swedish tradition that has become current again,” and the catalogs in the following year also included white bedroom suites. (Fig. 8.5) In 1963, Hemsö was introduced as Ikea’s bestselling bedroom suite, which is an indication of how popular such suites of bedsteads, bedside tables, and dressing table were, especially the white-lacquered ones. The style is simple and straight, and the main characteristics are the stiles used in the bedstead and matching chairs, reminiscent of Ikea’s dining set as well as Malmsten’s furniture. Similarly, white-lacquered furniture suites with vertical stiles serving as a decorative feature, building on a Gustavian tradition, were also popular from

25 Bra bohag, Bra bohag 1963/64, 18. Swedish text: “Finns det något så svenskt som Carl Malmstens möbler! Han har renodlat vår gamla fina herrgårdsstil och ger sina möbler den där underbara hantverkskänslan som står sig genom alla tider. En Bodafors-möbel signerad Carl Malmsten kommer även nästa generation att visa upp med stolthet.” The bedroom furniture shown was Birgitta from Bodafors, made of Honduras mahogany and also available in lacquered birch. An earlier catalog also featured Birgitta in mahogany as well as in pearl-gray lacquered birch along with the Dux bed Aveny of whitewashed oak, more closely associated with the eighteenth century through its light color. Bra bohag, Bra bohag 1962/63, 8-9.

26 Möbel-Ikea, Katalog 1962, 2-3. Swedish text: “Att sovrumsmöbler skall vara lackerade är en gammal trevlig svensk tradition som blivit aktuell igen.” The same interior was also shown in the 1963 and 1965 catalogs. The one-bedroom apartments set up as a model for a young couple at the beginning of the catalogs, starting in 1962, had white bedroom suites including dressing tables in 1963–1965.

the time before World War I and throughout the 1920s in drawing rooms, girls’ rooms, guest rooms, and children’s rooms. (Fig. 8.6)

Since the late nineteenth century and into the 1920s, Rococo and Gustavian styles were considered particularly suitable for parlors and bedrooms. The Swedish eighteenth-century Gustavian style used in the smaller manor houses and vicarages of the countryside was far removed from the gilded Louis XVI-style that had influenced the elegant salons of the 1880s. In the 1890s, a growing interest in the Swedish eighteenth-century heritage had arisen, and the light simplicity of the country houses became fashionable. A reason for the popularity of such white-lacquered furniture, according to curator Marianne Olsson of the Nordic museum, was that the organization Svensk hemslöjd (Swedish homecraft) had displayed them in Stockholm and around the country during a couple of decades since its foundation in 1899. Soon they were seen as typically Swedish.

Just as Ikea and Bra bohag promoted manor house-style furniture suites, several furniture factories had produced “Gustavian manor house suites” before 1910, inspired by Karin and Carl Larsson’s turn-of-the-century white drawing room. During the 1910s,

29 The SSF and Nationalmuseum curated a Gustavian exhibition in 1891, and Carl Larsson had used eighteenth-century pattern books to redesign the drawing-room depicted in The Lazy Corner with its light pink walls divided by green moldings. Simple chairs painted pearl gray, untreated wooden floors, green tile stoves or decorated in blue, along with checkered linen fabrics, were admired, such as in a reconstructed maid’s chamber at Gripsholm castle in 1893, similar to the Larsson’s drawing-room in its rural simplicity and light range of colors. Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, “Ett hem av sin tid,” in Carl och Karin Larsson: Skapare av ett svenskt ideal (originally published in English as Carl and Karin Larsson: Creators of the Swedish style), ed. Michael Snodin and Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1998), 66-68.
30 Olsson, “Rokoko eller funkis,” 54-55.
there was much discussion within the SSF about finding a new, national style. Olsson points out that the critics eventually agreed about returning to the Gustavian period, which was already happening.  

The eighteenth century came to have a particularly esteemed position in Swedish cultural history and material culture.

**A Timeless Ideal with Roots in the Eighteenth Century**

Looking back to earlier museum practice and restoration projects we can find evidence for why the eighteenth century served as an ideal in the midst of a modernist era. Even in 1948, two well-known critics and devoted modernists waxed enthusiastic about what they saw in the newly restored Haga pavilion from the late eighteenth century. Gustaf Näsström referred to the pavilion as part of the Swedish cultural heritage, using terms that were typical when describing Swedish building tradition: he spoke of “the airy, blonde austerity” softened by the summer light of the dining room and the “distinguished simplicity” of the *entresol* rooms, which he associated with the “pleasant manor house life” of the late eighteenth century. The other critic, Gotthard Johansson, highlighted the accord between the Gustavian and the modern period, noting how the wall paintings had a “clear and cool freshness” closer to the current time than to the brown tones of the nineteenth century. He further referred to the large glazed windows

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31 Ibid., 54-55. A return to biedermeier was an alternative. Swedish text: “Gustavianska herrgårdsmöblemang”.
taking in the surrounding landscape “in an amazingly modern way” and to the king’s private rooms as “what a modern person would like to call nice and comfortable.”

Architectural historian Victor Edman finds it typical of the time that the critics see the Haga pavilion in modern terms, as at the time it was an accepted view that modern architecture was closely related to the period around 1800. In examining three key reconstructions, Edman has observed how, in addition to giving an experience of eighteenth-century interiors to the visitors, the Haga restoration also reveals a period taste for functional furnishing and light colors. Even though it was not possible to return all the furniture and objects to Gustav III’s pavilion in Haga, the sober, sparse furnishing of the reconstruction in 1948 corresponded to contemporary modern taste, according to Edman. In the same way, the color scheme after the restoration was much milder and paler than the original colorful one. In light of Edman’s findings, it is not surprising that Allt i Hemmet, Ikea, and others also evoke a “timeless” eighteenth-century ideal in the midst of the modern. Using the same rhetoric in reviewing the reconstruction of the home of Carl Linnaeus (von Linné) in Uppsala, art historian Ragnar Josephson spoke of the “timeless character” of the eighteenth-century interior, restored according to the taste of the 1930s with its neutral-colored walls. In the homes of art historians and museum professionals of the 1930s and 1940s, there was a mixture of Gustavian furniture and the modern from

34 Ibid., 198.
35 Ibid., 194.
36 Ibid., 223-24.
Svenskt Tenn and Bruno Mathsson, but not from the nineteenth century because they considered it to be a lifeless revival.  

There was a link between the promoters of modernism and major reconstruction and preservation projects of the 1930s and 1940s, as Edman points out. By that time, museum and heritage experts collaborated on a new ideal of restoring old buildings. They created complete reconstructions to give the visitor a greater experience of how people might have lived in past times, rather than a strict scientific approach where original sections mixed with museum sections against a neutral backdrop. In 1930, at the same time as the Skansen open-air museum was installing an eighteenth-century manor house, the international Stockholm Exhibition gained worldwide attention in the promotion of modernist architecture. What could have been a conflict was actually a way of popularizing national history and a way of differentiating the old from the new.  

When the authors of the Swedish modernist manifesto acceptera sought to separate the old from the new and not build “half-old” buildings pretending to be old, such as the Stockholm City Hall, it was an argument to build modern buildings and liberate architecture from the shackles of tradition. Edman also sees it as an argument to recreate historic environments in their original setting so that the old buildings could become representations of the development toward modern society.  

In defining Swedish identity in art history and material culture, it was important to define and value what was specifically Swedish so as to enhance a national self-esteem.

37 Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, conversation with author December 20, 2016, remembering her own childhood home and the dining room of Erik Wettergren, director of the Nationalmuseum.  
38 Edman, Sjuttonhundratalet som svenskt ideal, 221-23.
On one hand, Edman suggests, it was important to show that Sweden was close to the leading cultural nations of the time, while, on the other hand, there was a risk of presenting itself as lacking in independence and copying other traditions. Therefore, the balance of Swedish art was played against an international background as something interesting and original.39

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the research and inventory projects resulted in highlighting Swedish simplicity and a lack of exaggerated decoration, especially in material culture of the eighteenth century. Simplicity became a Swedish characteristic, including both aesthetic and moral values, according to Edman, explaining that what was seen as too gaudy and decorated in the foreign models appeared to be refined in meeting Swedish circumstances. Still, in the historiography of the early twentieth century, there was an echo of a well-known nineteenth-century writer’s words on the influence of Swedish poverty. In this way, the often-simplified forms of Swedish art turned into positive qualities, even though they could express per se a lack of economic resources, talented artists, or craftsmen.40

39 Ibid., 207-09.
40 Ibid., 207-10. The writer Edman referred to was Carl Jonas Love Almqvist, who in 1838 wrote a classic text called “Den svenska fattigdomens betydelse” (the Significance of the Swedish poverty), whose theme involved learning to withstand the hardship of this country as a means to become hardy. Consequently, the first survey of Swedish art history in 1913 did not include Rococo interiors and architecture, only art, as they were seen as superficial and decorative. Rather, it was the later Gustavian, the Swedish version of Louis XVI, with its light interiors that was seen as an alternative to the heavy interiors around the turn of the century 1900. Edman, Sjuttonhundratalet som svenskt ideal, 212-14. Still in 1988, the Nationalmuseum saw history through the eyes of modernism and excluded objects with the typical ornaments of the time in the exhibition The Triumph of Simplicity: 350 Years of Swedish Silver, as Magnus Olausson pointed out: “The simple was the Swedish.” Magnus Olausson and Magnus Lönroth, preface to Silverskatter från svensk stormaktstid (Stockholm and Lidköping: Nationalmuseum and Stiftelsen Läckö Slott, 2002), 7-8. Swedish text: “Det enkla var det svenska.”
When the Traditional was Fashionable

Further promoting the eighteenth-century ideal, Allt i Hemmet declared in a headline that “the old-fashioned is fashionable.” In the article, Lena Larsson featured Malmsten’s dining set *Herrgården* and rounded, upholstered seating furniture against the Drottningholm theater wallpaper as “an inviting living room” in a full-page interior published in 1960.⁴¹ (Fig. 8.7) In a comparison between a modern and a traditional home, she favored the old-fashioned. Using positive terms such as “old-fashioned charm” and “fine traditional in a soft old-fashioned way,” she compared those interiors with the “straight, simple modern” ones without any positive modifiers. In the caption to the Malmsten interior, Larsson highlighted how “the old and the new meet in a balanced interplay between material, form, and tradition” in Malmsten’s furniture. In the full-page photo of the modern living room, Larsson was more objective in her analysis, stating that we “furnish above all for functional comfort with easily moveable seating furniture, easily accessible table surfaces for rest and get-togethers.”⁴² Larsson had placed Malmsten’s furniture on contemporary monochrome carpets, making a point of adjusting the old-fashioned to the contemporary setting while avoiding compromises such as old-fashioned ceiling lamps with electric lightbulbs, which give neither sufficient light nor substantial coziness. Here again we find the word “timeless” in describing a drawing with

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modern pieces of traditional character, such as a tall pine chest-of-drawers with rounded knobs and a rounded armchair by Kerstin Hörlin-Holmquist next to a floor lamp with rosy fabric against a gray-striped wallpaper; Larsson thought that “all are good things from today’s production, created for those of us who appeal to the timeless but not extreme forms.”\textsuperscript{43} (See Fig. 8.7)

For \textit{Allt i Hemmet}, the contemporary flair for the eighteenth century became an argument for how to personalize standardized interiors. In their mission against boring interiors, Fredriksson and Larsson argued: “Do not believe everyone who says that it must be standardized, uniform, drab, boring. It depends on the people. No young people have ever had so many possibilities to create fun homes, personal homes, beautiful homes.”\textsuperscript{44} In this 14-page article plus cover from 1962, they strongly encourage young people to make their homes reflect personal taste and interests. In contrast to the practical and rational approach of other advisory sources, the magazine encouraged readers to use their hobbies, the colors they love, and to allow themselves to be romantic or inspired by nature or writers. In a pedagogical and lighthearted way—without a lecturing tone—their schemes reflected living rooms for seven made-up women or men living by themselves or in couples.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 34. Swedish text: “Även helt moderna föremål kan ha en påtaglig och fin traditionell karaktär: fåtöljens rundade former, den höga furubyrån med sina knoppar, lampan med sitt friska, klara rosentyg, den grårandiga tapeten, alltsammans är goda ting ur dagens produktion, som skapats för oss som tilltalas av tidlösa men inte extrema former.”

Fredriksson and Larsson aimed to give readers the confidence to resist the conventional choice of seating group, dining set, and carpet. (Fig. 8.8) Lisen, the first of the fictional inhabitants, had always loved old things and paintings by Carl Larsson, and had inherited a painted eighteenth-century vernacular cabinet that took pride of place in the living room, where her husband “rocked in a rocking chair, loving her and the peaceful vicarage atmosphere she had created in a one-bedroom apartment in a high-rise building.”

Presented as if it were not really approved—and perhaps was a bit daring for a magazine like Allt i Hemmet—there was also a flowery, romantic interior, such as Ikea had offered the same year in its catalog: “Here lives a courageous girl, as it is bold to be a romantic.” (Fig. 8.10) Highlighting the old vernacular furnishings and Carl Larsson theme in the first interior as well as in a romantic interior, Allt i Hemmet conveyed a feeling for the peasant heritage, which was close to most Swedes, along with an interest in the eighteenth century manor. Fredriksson and Larsson also embraced a notion of the decorative, which was often marked as feminine and not considered in “good” taste. That Larsson highlighted Malmsten, rosy lampshades, and “the old-fashioned charm” in a widely read magazine like Allt i Hemmet in the early 1960s may well have contributed to

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45 Ibid., 29. Swedish text: “Och han – ja han gungar i en gungstol och älskar henne och den rofyllda prästgårdstämning hon skapat i höghusets tvärummare.” The other living rooms featured various inhabitants: Lennart, who loves nature and Hemingway and has a zebra skin on the floor and old guns on the wooden wall; Kajsa and Olle, who love to throw parties and dinners and have practical folding chairs and tables; Maj, who is brave enough to be romantic and has flowery wallpaper and a red divan; Lars and Lisa, who have a double couch in the living room so that they can comfortably watch television, read, and listen to music; Ulf, who loves cars and has such details in the interior; and Per and Kerstin, who just had triplets and have turned the living room into a nursery.

46 Ibid., 35. Swedish text: “Här bor en modig flicka, för det är djärvt att våga vara romantisk ...”
the popularity of seventeenth-century and more romantic interiors in general. In summarizing the furniture of the 1960s, Kerstin Wickman confirms that *Allt i Hemmet* “played an important role as an arbiter of taste, promoting a style that was more romantic and rich in odds and ends than the austere message of the Swedish Society of Crafts and Design.”

*Allt i Hemmet*, Ikea and Bra bohag were not alone in promoting this ideal past. One of the main Swedish paint producers also launched a series of paints, called *Blond Harmoni* (Blonde Harmony), referring to the same examples as Olsson and Edman: “built on a Nordic color tradition, as we find for example in the light, airy interiors of Carl Larsson’s paintings and the Skogaholm manor house at Skansen—an expression of our longing for light in a country with very little sun.”

(Fig. 8.11) The illustration featured a hobby room with a red-painted loom in the color *Allmoge* (Peasant or Folk) and green benches and curtains, contrasting colors inspired by the Larsson home. While Ikea acknowledged how the Larsson home inspired the popularity of white-lacquered furniture, the domestic ideal depicted by Carl Larsson also took an even more prominent place in *Allt i Hemmet*.

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The Artist’s Home of Karin and Carl Larsson

From its first issue, Allt i Hemmet had featured the turn-of-the-century interiors of artists Karin and Carl Larsson as an ideal. Under the heading “We want warmth” in the very first issue in 1956, Lena Larsson shared her ideas on how to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere, with “soft textiles, round shapes, comfort, friendly details, mild lighting, and warm colors.” These aspects sat easily with her promotion of Malmsten and the timeless traditional furniture forms he represented.49 To convey the importance of “friendly details” to create warmth, she used Larsson’s painting Lathörnet (The Lazy Corner), pointing out the wrinkled handmade rag rug, the couch with its durable cover inviting one to casually lie down, the little side table with favorite books within reach, and the dog on the floor who “seems as though he never wants to leave.”50 (Fig. 8.12) Lena Larsson and Elias Svedberg referred to this painting in the introduction to their best-selling interior design book, Heminredning, as a model for a “charming and friendly” interior combining the ideal of “practical and beautiful, simple and fine, spacious as a whole, but with carefully planned details” making it a home that is alive and used.51

Since the Larsson house was a farmstead, it was vitally connected to Swedish peasant culture, becoming an inspiring model for those engaged in creating new ideals of living for the working class around the turn of the century.52 Design and social reformer

50 Ibid., 6-7. Swedish text: “...för att inte tala om hunden, som ser ut som om han aldrig skulle vilja gå därför.”
Ellen Key had similarly admired the Larsson home, as children were welcome everywhere and there was no division into formal and informal rooms. In 1951, in a handbook for the Swedish Radio, setting-up-home consultant Lilly Arrhenius described how Larsson’s watercolors evoked “the undefinable that one wants to call Swedish coziness.” Like Key and Lena Larsson, she recalled “the image of a children’s paradise—no forbidden playgrounds, no fragile objects to be careful of. There were rooms one could live and play and breathe in.”

Lena Larsson, one of the most influential interior designers of the 1950s and 1960s, was one of those who drew inspiration from the Larsson home. Writing on the heritage of Carl Larsson, Lena Larsson recalled how she came to Sundborn as a teenager in the 1930s and recognized the interiors from the pictures she had seen on the walls of her school, where the first principal was a friend of Key and had visited the artist’s house. Lena Larsson contrasted these images with the white modernist interiors she had seen at the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition. When she became a student of Malmsten a few years later, she observed that “this extremely Swedish cabinetmaker and craft prophet, [was] a cautious admirer of Carl Larsson’s sense of homeliness.”


Lena Larsson then compared the “charming and friendly” *Lazy Corner* to a Malmsten interior in the first edition of *Heminredning* from 1947.

As with the casual atmosphere of Larsson’s Lilla Hyttnäs in Sundborn, where there was no distinction between formal and informal rooms, the Malmsten interior invited the whole family to share an everyday life around the table, by the foldout writing desk in the bookshelf, and in the comfortable armchair with a basket full of sewing supplies at hand. Designed for the Co-op, Malmsten called the furniture *Vardags* (Everyday), derived from Swedish vernacular tradition in style and details.\(^56\) In view of that, it was not surprising that the Co-op’s *Sätta bo* promoted the timelessness and quality of Malmsten furniture.

Lena Larsson noted a shared feeling of “homeliness” in the work Carl Larsson and Carl Malmsten, both artists rooted in the Swedish tradition of sparsely furnished eighteenth-century Gustavian rooms with their typical light color scheme and plain furniture. These features had been called Swedish Modern in international exhibitions of the 1930s.\(^57\) *Allt i Hemmet* further promoted Carl Larsson as “the father of modern interior design,” having inspired current designers and interior designers, according to the magazine.\(^58\) In this article, the magazine associated the origin of Swedish Modern with Carl Larsson’s airy

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\(56\) Ibid., 221. The Malmsten interior had been shown at National Museum’s exhibition *Kontakt med nyttokonstnären* in 1944. See also Larsson and Svedberg, *Heminredning* (1947), 11-13.

\(57\) Larsson, “Arvet efter Carl Larsson,” 222.

interiors in blond colors, drawing a line back to the eighteenth century and the “refined taste of the Gustavian era.”

Like their descriptions of *The Lazy Corner*, the magazine's editors pointed out the unpretentious everyday life replete with children and adults, flowers, and dogs, a vision that Carl Larsson was the first to intimately depict, according to *Allt i Hemmet*. To help readers discover his “heartfelt, authentic Swedish holiday atmosphere,” the magazine included a reprint of *Nu är det jul igen*, a Christmas illustration of a celebration in the Larsson home; readers were encouraged to display it on a wall in their own homes “to make it more and more dear and saturated with tradition.” With this gesture, *Allt i Hemmet* conveyed the value of looking back to an idealized past, in this case also pointing out the particularly Swedish tradition of gathering depicted in the image and even encouraging readers to create their own Christmas tradition through the poster. This initiative contrasted with the official efforts of the People’s Movements for Art Promotion (Konstfrämjandet) to make available real graphic art prints, such as those depicted in the Bra bohag catalogs, instead of oil prints and reproductions.

*The Lazy Corner* and other paintings of interiors by Larsson had been reproduced widely for many years, but they were newly available in the 1960s. His watercolors, accompanied by texts, had been published in various editions and languages starting in 1899. *Ett hem (A Home and Our Home)* appeared in Germany and Austria as *Das Haus*.

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60 Ibid. Swedish text: “innerliga, åktsvenska helgstämning.” “Vår tanke med gåvan är att ni skall få en julpyndad att spara år efter år, en sån där sak som blir allt kärare, alltmer traditionsmättad.”
in der Sonne and sold almost 200,000 copies by the time of Larsson’s death in 1919. The copyright expired in 1969, after which time his images began to appear on cookie jars, trays, and all kinds of products and advertisements.62

Allt i Hemmet encouraged readers to be bolder and more personal in the decoration of their standardized homes. According to Fredriksson, the move away from using drab colors in the 1930s had developed into a fear of color and the timid selection of meaningless decorative glass anxiously placed on a shelf. “Gone is the exuberance, which makes the room tolerant,” Fredriksson observed in 1959, comparing nineteenth-century Larsson interiors with contemporary ones, and thereby indirectly criticizing such interiors in the Bra bohag catalog where fine Swedish glass objects were placed as single objects on display.63 Behind the current reappraisal was the sentiment that “old-fashioned, cozy atmosphere is a value that has disappeared with the serial production in our severely standardized homes.” To show the contrast, the magazine copied Carl Larsson’s Till en liten vira in a modern setting with standardized furniture, but painted in bold red and green and with the shelves full of practical yet decorative household goods evoking a “generous exuberance,” just like the artist’s home.64 (Figs. 8.13-14)

64 Ibid. Swedish text: “Man talar så gärna om gammaldags trivsel och menar, att det är ett värde, som kommit bort bland serieprodukterna i våra hårt standardiserade hem. . . . generös frodighet”. Another Carl Larsson promotion in the same issue, was Lena Larsson’s “fantastic wishlist” of six features she would like in her home, including a bedroom inspired by Carl Larsson’s with a four-poster bed in the middle of the room. Lena Larsson, “Min fantastiska önskelista,” Allt i Hemmet 4, no.12 (1959): 38-41.
With this, *Allt i Hemmet* began a crusade against unimaginatively furnished living rooms. “We have really been trained to choose WHAT IS CORRECT . . . Why have we then become so boring and standardized?” the magazine wondered.65 In at least four articles, the magazine concluded that the standardization of apartment construction had impacted living room furniture and its placement.66 The construction methods and minimum measurements had resulted in the long, narrow living rooms typical of new apartments, where even the placement of furniture was decided beforehand by the location of power outlets. *Allt i Hemmet* protested: “Neither the building contractor nor the outlet should decide where the couch shall be placed.”67

Contributing to the homogenous apartment plans repeated all over Sweden was the central steering of the key building companies HSB and Riksbyggen, along with the restriction to build one- and two-bedroom apartments. This had led to a severe voluntary standardization (*typiserung*), according to architect Lennart Holm.68 Furthermore, heavy

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66 Florin, text, and Larsson, interiors, “Så fint... och så tråkigt,” 34-41; Eivor Olsson, “Det behöver inte bli så lika,” *Allt i Hemmet* 6, no. 10 (1961): 17-21; Fredriksson and Larsson, interiors, “Huset annorlunda,” 26-39; Inga Lisa Brommesson, “Vilket rum tycker ni bäst om?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 10, no. 3 (1965): 34-43. Eivor Olsson had visited some homes in a suburban apartment building where the magazine had furnished the child-friendly family room of “Erk a Maja” in the 1950s, discussed in chapter three. To illustrate that furnishings need not look the same, she included some anonymous examples, including an image of the same family room.


concrete slabs with a limited number of widths were too rigid to offer free space for lighter walls, which might lend flexibility to the plans.69

Encouraging the reader to choose bold color and bring out objects with a personal touch, the magazine further promoted an ideal captured in the “fireworks of color in, for example, Carl Larsson’s charming home.”70 Lena Larsson reshuffled the furniture in a typical, rectangular living room, placing the seating group by the window and the dining table by the inner wall, in opposition to the common way of placing the furniture, according to the magazine.71 (Fig. 8.15) The headline was “So fine... and so boring”—and the “boring,” common way of furnishing was exactly what the housing board had used for its model living room in the 1960 God bostad, which included a seating group by the door and dining table by the window.72 Consequently, in addition to rearranging the furniture, Larsson added color: a bright red shelf by the window that matched a bright red clock on the opposite wall above the table. (Fig. 8.16) By contrasting the red with green objects (a bread basket, glass jars in the spice rack, and a fruit basket on the coffee table), she pointed out that red and green are the strongest contrasting colors and suggested that they are colors that can make you happy.

Objects on display played an important role in Lena Larsson’s personalized living room in the article, in which she opposed the official advice of Bosättning and similar

69 Holm, “Bostadens form som ideologisk spegel,” 85.
71 Florin, text, and Larsson, interiors, “Så fint... och så träkigt,” 34-41.
publications. She did not choose fragile Swedish crystal pieces or the approved home

craft objects that Bra bohag featured in their catalogs. Rather, to cheer up the typical

shelving and storage system along the long wall, she displayed a range of objects more in

line with the artist’s home in Sundborn. There was a group of colorfully painted Russian
dolls, a similarly Russian-looking flask, a trumpet indicating a hobby (another

contribution to a personalized feeling), an odd-looking candle stick with a glass bowl, a
couple of small pictures, and a ceramic figure by Lisa Larsson of Gustavsberg as a

bookend. In the red shelf by the window, she mixed wooden dolls (probably souvenirs), a

miniature grandfather’s clock from Mora in Dalarna, and a mobile of snowflakes. Out

of all these decorative objects, probably only the trumpet and the Gustavsberg figurine,

which came from a Swedish factory, would have been approved by the official guidelines

in Bosättning, as previously discussed. Similarly, Henrikson-Abelin in the Co-op book

Sätta bo called for caution, warning against a mess of pictures and ornaments, and

affirming that “mixing old and new always requires prudence and a sound judgment.”

The Bra bohag book Bo bättre, trivas mera shared “a golden rule: Do not have too much

stuff out at the same time. Prepare for simplicity rather than the opposite!” followed by a

pledge that “ornaments such as vases, bowls, etc., should be chosen to be both useful and

a delight for the eye and the hand.”

73 Florin, text, and Larsson, interiors, “Så fint... och så tråkigt,” 36-39. See chapter on “functioning
decoration” in Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames, 143-99.

74 Warn Bugge and Ralf, eds., Bosättning (1955), 45. See chapter four.

75 Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962), 93. Swedish text: “Tumregeln är att effekterna skall vara få och att

de behöver en lugn bakgrund för att synas. Rörigt blir det också om tavlor och prydnadssaker verkar

liksom planlöst utströdda... Att blanda gammalt och nytt fördrar alltid varsamhet och gott omdöme.”

76 Marita Lindgren-Fridell, “Pryda hemmet,” in Bo bättre, trivas mera en handbok utgiven av Bra bohag,
Given this cautious advice, *Allt i Hemmet* sought to shift inspiration toward the Larsson house in Sundborn. When Lena Larsson and her colleagues described how to personalize the standard kitchen, they referred to Carl Larsson and used words such as cozy and friendly to promote a rural touch. They featured several green-painted kitchens with red chairs or other details, including traditional rag rugs, and, instead of “boring, stainless” handles on the cabinets, they favored “charming” wooden knobs. Another suggestion in several articles was to expose household goods on open shelves as in the Larsson home by removing a couple of cupboard doors and placing decorative strips on the edge of the shelves.  

(Fig. 8.17)

One typical example was the dream kitchen of *Allt i Hemmet*’s Rosa Horowitz, an idyllic version of architect Holm’s rational family kitchen published in 1957, including a desk for work by the window. (Figs. 8.18 and 2.19) In Horowitz’s version, however, the red and green colors and the old-fashioned sewing machine suggested a rural atmosphere, in spite of the modern Ericophone. The caption affirmed this ideal: “Is it not alive and cozy? Just look at the Carl Larsson-like colors, the happy green rag rug on the floor (which certainly will get dirty quickly) and the delightful workspace by the window.”

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The magazine’s focus on kitchens was to promote personalization of the standard kitchen with a rural, old-fashioned touch, offering enough room for more activities than just cooking, which was symbolized by the introductory statement in their big kitchen feature in 1962: “We want to get away from the laboratory kitchen, we want space for the kitchen couch.”

A blue kitchen couch of a vernacular type came to symbolize both Ikea’s and Allt i Hemmet’s ideal kitchen in the first half of the 1960s, encouraging the personalization of the standard kitchen. (Figs. 7.3 and 8.19) Apart from the color, it recalled the red-painted stick-back couch and chairs against the green paneling in the dining room of Karin and Carl Larsson. Allt i Hemmet used the blue couch both on the cover and across the first spread of their 24-page kitchen feature about “Festive, cozy, distinct standard kitchens” in 1962. Ikea covered the back of the 1965 catalog with the same type of blue couch, with matching stick-back chairs in a colorful dining alcove of the kitchen.

The blue vernacular-type kitchen couches continued to reflect an emphasis on the traditional features such as stick-back chairs, kitchen couches, and rag rugs that had been popular in the 1950s; in this way, modern and traditional aspects could be seen working together in the Swedish standard kitchen. This was also the ideal promoted for couples setting up home. Around the teak kitchen table in the Bra bohag catalog, there were white-painted stick-back chairs and a matching stick-back couch, painted orange as if

den rara arbetsplatsen framme vid fönstret.”

79 Ibid., 15. Swedish text: “Vi vill bort från laboratorieköket, vi vill ha plats för kökssoffan.”
80 Ibid., 60-62, Swedish text on the cover: “Festliga, trivsamma, annorlunda standardkök”; Möbel-Ikea, Katalog 1965, 260. The couch was called Dalom, a shorter name for the province of Dalarna, thus furthering a traditional ideal. Allt i Hemmet featured the same couch in Marguerite Walfridson, “Kök för hela familjen,” Allt i Hemmet 9, no. 10 (1964): 73.
taken from the home of Karin and Carl Larsson.\textsuperscript{81} The Co-op featured an almost identical setup, with white \textit{Lilla Åland} chairs by Malmsten and a matching stick-back couch from the Co-op along with a teak table in a kitchen in \textit{Sätta bo}.\textsuperscript{82} Ikea’s setting-up-home special in 1962 also featured basic stick-back chairs along with a “sturdy and durable” table covered by a Perstorp plastic laminate.\textsuperscript{83} Finally, the 1965 \textit{Bosättning} showed a stick-back chair and stick-back couch in the kitchen.\textsuperscript{84} From all of these examples, the vernacular-inspired ideal of the Larsson interior became widespread, and the kitchen couch became part of a continuous effort to promote larger kitchens, which \textit{God bostad} embraced in 1964.

Above all, Fredriksson and Larsson promoted the artist’s home as a “lifestyle come true,” combining function, tradition, and a friendly atmosphere for all. Many of the features in the charming and friendly house were thought to fit children, and they acknowledged that Key shared the same ideas regarding the importance of children and their environment. In Lilla Hyttnäs, they found the predecessor to their child-friendly all-room and admired the creative joy, the cozy atmosphere of contrasting colors, and “the old peasant heritage” in the dining room.\textsuperscript{85} As Ikea and Bra bohag had promoted the Swedish eighteenth-century ideal, Fredriksson and Larsson used a full spread to show the light drawing room with furniture of “Swedish manor house character” and “simple

\begin{thebibliography}{8}
\bibitem{81} Bra bohag, \textit{Bra bohag 1961-62}, 2.
\bibitem{82} Henriksson-Abelin, \textit{Sätta bo} (1962), 49, 112.
\bibitem{84} Krantz-Jensen, \textit{Bosättning} (1965), 14.
\bibitem{85} Fredriksson and Larsson, “Var välkommen kära Du…,” 34-43. Swedish text: “det är en livsstil som har förverkligats . . . gammalt bondearv”.
\end{thebibliography}
striped, easily washable cotton rags” on the wooden floor. This combination of practicality, which fit in with the Swedish official context of rational housework, functional furniture, and personal arrangements, appealed to the authors, who stressed how Karin and Carl Larsson had combined traditional furniture and bold colors with a friendly atmosphere where both children and adults were welcome. They regularly shared the ideal of the artist’s home in the magazine as well as in the book *Heminredning*. In this way, they followed Key, who, in her *Beauty for All*, had admired less the style than the attitude of Karin and Carl Larsson: their ability to care for needs in view of their economic, technical, and material resources.

### Rootlessness and the Dream of the Little Red Cottage

In sharing the ideas of Key and Karin and Carl Larsson in words and images, the magazine contributed to spreading the eighteenth-century and Larsson house ideal that we have seen in the Ikea and Bra bohag catalogs. Signaling contentment and community, the Larsson home’s simplicity, light interiors, bright colors, and natural materials have become a stylistic ideal that Ikea continues to reference—“the very incarnation of everything Swedish,” according to Sara Kristoffersson. The influence of Key and the

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86 Ibid., 41. Swedish text: “Möblerna har svensk herrgårdsprägel, . . . och på golvet löper enkla randiga och lättvättade bomullsmattor.
87 Later articles: Lena Larsson, “Vad kan Sundborn lära oss i dag?” (What can Sundborn teach us today?), *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 3 (1969): 56-57; Birgitta Ek, “Carl Larsson - ny i dag,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 2 (1970): 14-21, including another feature where the magazine has created contemporary interiors inspired by Carl Larsson’s paintings, using mostly Malmsten furniture but suggesting that Ikea and the Co-op offer alternatives.
89 Kristoffersson, *Design by IKEA*, 59.
Larssons, along with a modernist admiration for Gustavian design—the triumph of simplicity—further explains why white-lacquered dining sets by Ikea and Malmsten were acceptable in such modernist interiors as contributors to an overall ideal of timeless quality. This does not fully explain, however, its significance in the early 1960s.

For *Allt i Hemmet*, there was an issue at stake greater than style and encouraging people to show their personality through their home furnishings. The romantic and vernacular interiors they promoted were a response to the changes experienced by Swedish society. The vision of a warm and comfortable home contrasted with what Fredriksson found in the new suburbs:

> But many do not feel at home, they lose themselves in the enormous anonymity of the suburbs, where the buildings are all the same with facades stretching toward the sky window by window. And inside the windows, infinite rows of exactly identical living rooms, with the same measurements, the same wall studs, the same placement of the outlet. Usually they are furnished with the same type of furniture, which come from the same assembly line in the same factories in long series.  

While aiming to encourage people to apply a more personal touch to their homes, Fredriksson critiqued what she found anonymous and monotonous in the new suburbs. Here also was a critique of ongoing production shifts, in which large-scale industry was increasingly replacing small, craft-based industries and consequently also influencing the assortment and the organization of retail furniture in Sweden.

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The rural and manor house ideal filled a psychic need during a time of change in the 1960s. Following Fredriksson’s thoughts on anonymity, Larsson and Svedberg remarked in their 1965 edition of *Heminredning*, “the happy and warm atmosphere and somewhat careless but human togetherness” of Carl Larsson’s paintings was a needed “compensation for all rootlessness, lack of feeling of homeliness, which follow the great move between countryside and town. They feel familiar.” Further emphasizing its eighteenth-century roots, Larsson and Svedberg compared *The Lazy Corner* with a watercolor from the eighteenth century by Jean Eric Rehn. It was similarly inviting, with a snoozing cat and dogs on a couch near the tile stove, and Larsson and Svedberg note how Carl Larsson’s eighteenth-century interior atmosphere has been transmitted to the twentieth century. As in *Allt i Hemmet*, it was the happy and warm feeling of togetherness in Larsson’s paintings they wanted to highlight, rather than the actual style. As Swedes left the countryside for cities, the social upheaval threw into sharp contrast the appeal of Carl Larsson’s idyllic paintings and his home in the rural village. Indeed, the idealized past was a prevalent theme in publications such as *Bra bohag*, *Allt i Hemmet*, and the Ikea catalog in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This was also an issue that *Allt i Hemmet* would problematize further.

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91 Larsson and Svedberg, *Heminredning* (1965), 16. In this edition they also included the Carl Larsson painting *Till en liten vira*, a colorful and warm interior, in which the authors also pointed out the practical details, 10-12. It was the same painting that *Allt i Hemmet* had featured in no. 12, 1959, see above. Swedish text: “Det som nu engagerar oss mest är den glada och varma stämningen av litet slarvig men mänsklig gemenskap. Vi behöver säkert faktorer av det slaget som kompensation för all rotlöshet, brist på hemkänsla, som följer i spåren på den stora flyttningen mellan land och stad. Man känner igen sig.” Looking back to the broad dissemination of Carl Larsson’s paintings since 1969, curator Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark confirmed that they were used to fill that purpose: “Everything where security, a feeling of homeliness, and Swedishness is the selling-point.” Stavenow-Hidemark, “Carl Larssons bilder,” 218. Swedish text: “allting där trygghet, hemkänsla och svenskhet är säljargument.”

92 Larsson and Svedberg, *Heminredning* (1965), 14-16.
The rationalization of agriculture in the 1960s and the consequently available summer cottages was a theme that *Allt i Hemmet* covered on a regular basis. While embracing the modern, the magazine cultivated a nostalgic longing for past times: “Every day, more than ten agricultural units are closed down in Sweden. It is fantastic! There are houses for sale everywhere—wonderful summer houses for the rushed inhabitants of the cities. The one who searches along the main tourist thoroughfares can find a cheap house in a fine old area. The distance matters less—the roads are getting better, the cars increase in number,” as *Allt i Hemmet* described the situation in 1962. The quote captures a time of increasing prosperity, consumption, and a positive view of what modern society could bring. A nostalgic, romantic view of a past agrarian society, became a touchstone at a time when tall apartment buildings formed new suburbs.

For the Swedish public, the rural was firmly associated with summer. The 1962 survey included drawings of different building types in the Swedish countryside along

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93 The magazine highlighted such features on the covers, including: “Vi köpte ett torp,” *Allt i Hemmet* 1, no. 6 (1956); “Fynd för sommarstugan 26 sidor läsning om torp och trädgård,” *Allt i Hemmet* 2, no. 5 (1957); ”Köp inte stugan i säcken,” *Allt i Hemmet* 3, no. 3 (1958); ”Varning för torpsojore!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 5, no. 9 (1960); ”Följ med till fritidslandet Norrland,” *Allt i Hemmet* 6, no. 5 (1961); ”Var finns torpen? Specialarticel för alla som vill ha ödegårdar,” *Allt i Hemmet* 7, no. 6 (1962); ”Gamla hus söker nya ägare,” *Allt i Hemmet* 8, no. 4 (1963); ”Torp och ödegårdar från 2.000 kr till 25.000 kr till salu,” *Allt i Hemmet* 8, no. 9 (1963); ”EXTRA 1000-tals torp till salu,” *Allt i Hemmet* 9, no. 4 (1964); Bertil Arwidson, ”Utvandrama, invandrina, nybyggarna,” *Allt i Hemmet* 9, no. 4 (1964): 13; ”Se hur fint man kan inreda ett gammalt torp,” *Allt i Hemmet* 9, no. 7 (1964); ”Mårbackas nejder,” *Allt i Hemmet* 9, no. 9 (1964); ”Mängder av torp till salu. Del 1: Nya bra fritidsstugor Del 2: Torp i alla prislägen,” *Allt i Hemmet* 10, no. 3 (1965); ”Del 1: Allt i Hemmetävlingen avgjord 4 nya stugor Del 2: Allt i Hemmet rustar upp ett eget torp,” *Allt i Hemmet* 10, no. 4 (1965); ”Vem vill köpa Sörgården? Torp till salu Mängder av ödegårdar i stort torpextra,” *Allt i Hemmet* 12, no. 3 (1967); ”Ett billigtt litet stall blev årets torp vi köpte, gjorde om, inredde,” *Allt i Hemmet* 12, no. 5 (1967); ”Del 2 Torp och gårdar under 20000 kr,” *Allt i Hemmet* 13, no. 3 (1968).

with a romantic view of life in the summer cottage illustrated by a wood stove, kerosene lamp, white curtains, and stick-back chairs: “A silent night in the country . . . one feels tranquility and a connection with past times, in spite of the fact that the old crofter would not have recognized himself. He had neither time nor means to burn candles until late at night.”

The dream of the traditional, vernacular charm was something that Ikea was early to adopt and promote, using pine in the living room as well as the new basement recreation room called gillestuga. In their 1965 catalog, Ikea introduced the new pine seating group Allmoge as “obviously ideal in your gillestuga or summer cottage, but it is also perfectly fine for an intimate living room.” (Fig. 8.20) The name Allmoge means country people or folk and further strengthens the link to a past peasant society at a time of great change in Sweden. Gillestuga was a new type of basement recreation room, in which gille means both banquet and guild—a further reference to the old days—and stuga was the all-room of peasant society, when many farms had one stuga for daily life and another for festive occasions.

The Ikea interior emulated a vernacular look through wooden paneling, brass picture frames, and a woven carpet with patterns alluding to traditional hand-woven techniques. The daisies on the coffee table further add to the room’s rural flair. Another set of pine

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95 Ibid. Swedish text: “En stilla kväll på landet . . . man känner ro och samband med forna tider, trots att den gamle torparen nog inte skulle känna igen sig. Han hade varken tid eller råd att bränna ljus till sent in på kvällen!”

96 Möbel-Ikea, Katalog 1965, 48. Swedish text: “Gruppen är naturligtvis idealisk i Er gille- eller sommarstuga, men passar utmärkt också i det intima vardagsrummet.” Ikeas first reference to peasant culture appeared in the 1958 catalog, which introduced hope chests, a few corner cabinets, and a sewing table with folk paintings typical of Dalarna, kurbits, as well as geographic names from that province: Rättvik, Leksand, Mora, Siljan, and Floda. Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog -58, 72-73.
furniture in the 1965 catalog was the rustic table, chairs, benches and corner cabinet Rustik of solid pine glazed in a natural shade.\textsuperscript{97} To further strengthen the vernacular style of this dining set, the table and bench are assembled with keyed mortise and tenon joints. In 1966, Erik Wørts had designed the dining sets Meny and Brage, which had more sleek than rustic lines and were not shown with traditional copper utensils on the wall, but were rather displayed in the ordinary living room settings of the catalog next to the typical teak groups and eighteenth-century-inspired Prinsess and Desirée models.\textsuperscript{98} In contrast to the promotion of eighteenth-century-groups in the early 1960s, Ikea did not speak of their pine series as being Swedish, but its traditional roots “emphasized the beautiful lines of the peasant tradition.”\textsuperscript{99}

Ikea’s Allmoge was also featured in the first gillestuga presented in Allt i Hemmet, an advertisement for clay building blocks in 1966 that furnished in a vernacular, rustic style. (Fig. 8.21) The copy invited the reader: “Come and see how cozy we have made it!” and continued, “When building your own house, you can get an equally comfortable and useful basement. Build a gillestuga, TV room, hobby room, and why not a sauna, sewing room, playroom,” activities also promoted in Allt i Hemmet.\textsuperscript{100} Several items

\textsuperscript{97} Möbel-Ikea, Katalog 1965, 133.
\textsuperscript{98} Möbel-Ikea, Katalog 1966, 129, 132. The dining set Rustik was featured on page 133. In addition to natural pine color, Meny and Brage were available stained in blue or “antique brown.”
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 132. Swedish text about Brage: “som har lagt tonvikten på allmogetraditionens vackra linjer.”
\textsuperscript{100} “Leca” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 11, no. 4 (1966): 98, also in no. 5. Swedish text: “Kom och se så ombonat vi fått! Ni som bygger eget kan få en lika trivsam och användbar källare. Bygg en gillestuga, TVrum, hobbyrum och varför inte bastu, syrum, lekrum.” The first time the idea of a gillestuga was mentioned in Allt i Hemmet, it appeared as a recreation room in the basement of a single-family house, a place where teenagers can spend time with their friends. Ingegärd Granlund, "Kul hemma?,” Allt i Hemmet 2, no. 9 (1957): 40, 81-82. Bra bohag followed suit in 1960–1961, noting that a gillestuga was an ideal place for hobbies that required space, depicting a boy building a model plane, having already completed a ship, with a film projector on the table in the background. Other suggested activities were improvised dinners for ten
create a vernacular, traditional atmosphere in the depicted interior: the leaded rectangular windows (indicative of placement in a cellar and further recalling the Larsson house and a national romantic version of a farmer’s cottage), the ceiling lamp made of a wooden wagon wheel, the old-fashioned copper coffee pots and forms, wooden and ceramic vernacular vessels on the wall and on wooden bracket shelves, the chest of drawer with vernacular kurbits painting typical of Dalarna, and similarly painted wooden horses in the windows, the wrought-iron floor lamp and candle-stick, the striped rag rugs on the wooden floor, the Neo-Renaissance chairs, and the two couches and matching coffee table of brown-stained wood. The gillestuga became hugely popular in a Sweden where more single-family houses were being built, especially in the 1970s, which eventually made pine the principal material of furniture and interiors for that decade.

The sense of rootlessness felt by people in the new suburbs and the cultural expressions of a lost peasant culture were still evident in the pages of Allt i Hemmet in 1965. Inviting their readers to select their “dream room” from seven interiors with dining furniture arranged by the magazine, Malmsten won over his modern contemporaries Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobsen, and Eero Saarinen.101 (Fig. 8.22) The result tells something...
about how deeply rooted the nostalgic dream of a vernacular past was in Sweden at the
time. This was also clear in how Allt i Hemmet described the rooms. While focused on
the practical features of the interiors, the description for Malmsten was the most poetic,
emphasizing the peasant heritage: “We Swedes will probably bear the dream of a birch
slope and the little red cottage with us in the rucksack on our journey through life over
the years. And there is indeed an air of cottage charm, birch slope, and meadowflower
fragrance in this interior, completely furnished by Malmsten furniture.” The writer
asked readers if they did not feel like caressing the silky-smooth table surface and serve a
nice cup of tea among the handwoven forest-green rag rug and moss-green chairs, against
a backdrop of a wallpaper reprinted from an eighteenth-century manor house. The
choice of Malmsten and the description of his interior, labeled “Lovely and old-
fashioned,” is yet another indication of how firmly rooted the vernacular and
eighteenth-century heritage were as a Swedish ideal at a time of great change in society
in the first half of the 1960s.

The Saarinen interior, with his Tulip chairs and table, on the other hand, pointed in
another direction, indicating something of a slowly developing change that would be
more visible in the second half of the 1960s. (Fig. 8.23) The description of the interior
encouraged readers to get used to the new, reassuring them that it is normal for the eye to

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102 Brommesson and Andersson, “Vilket rum tycker ni bäst om?,” 38. Swedish text: “Drömmen om
björkbacken och den lilla röda stugan lär vi svenskar bära med oss i ränseln på färden genom livet och åren.
Och nog är det något av stugcharm, av björkbacke och ängsblommedoft över det här rummet, som är helt
inrett med Malmsten-möbler.”
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid. Swedish text: “Rart och gammaldags”.

be shocked by something extremely new in color or form, in this case plastic and cast steel. Using the same argument as the nineteenth-century design reformers, readers were comforted by the fact that “the new form was completely and honestly adjusted to the material—plastic and metal—and to a new technique. . . . Exclusive furniture, unthinkable in another material.” Aware that this might be shocking for its readers, the magazine had chosen to feature it with “old-fashioned romantic flowers and coffee cups as a contrast to all the ultramodern.” The introduction of avant-garde design reached Swedish readers who still felt close to the countryside and for years had been taught to choose timeless design and craftsmanship that would last forever. The Saarinen interior, labeled “Brave New World,” came in fifth place, whereas the interior with Jacobsen’s Ant chairs and Aalto’s table, labeled “Pleasant and objective,” was the least liked by the readers of Allt i Hemmet.

The magazine’s new approach to consumption evident in the article about “dream rooms” marked a change. It was not specifically directed to young people who were about to buy furniture or seeking to reshuffle the existing furniture and add some color, as we have seen before. Rather, this article actually encouraged consumption, indicating that it was right to buy something new: “To buy something new for the home—imagine how fun! Perhaps one needs a dining table or some chairs. But not the first or the best this

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106 Ibid. Swedish text: “här har man valt det gammaldags romantiska i blommor och koppar som kontast till allt det ultramoderna.” The cups were Marianne Westman’s Mon Amie from Rörstrand, in production since 1952.

107 “Rart och gammaldags,” 84. Swedish text: “Sköna nya värld” and “Trivsamt och sakligt”.
time, rather something that really suits us ...”108 The fact that the article emphasizes “fun” in buying new furniture indicates the newness of this possibility, that the consumption society had reached another level. Above all, the aim of the article was to show readers that one “can create a personal home that differs from the neighbors’ in spite of the fact that one has the same measurements and shape of room.”109

The ten-page article featuring seven interiors was yet another version of Allt i Hemmet’s encouragement of personalizing standardized living rooms. The arguments were of the same type as in previous articles: “We live in houses that look the same, the same apartments, rooms of standardized measurements,” and, regarding the furniture available in stores: “We have seen most of it before—it is almost the same furniture everywhere. Teak and oak in long fine rows. Solid, proper, of course. But still in a way uniform and monotonous—as if spit out by the same machine ...”110

Allt i Hemmet Debates the New Suburbs

At the same time as Allt i Hemmet published articles idealizing rural life in the Larsson house in the small village of Sundborn, the magazine began a sustained critique of the large-scale housing projects in the new suburbs. Rationalization was the key word that permeated society, from agriculture to construction, and the lost lifestyle of the

109 Ibid., 43. Swedish text: “kan skapa en personlig hemmiljö som skiljer sig från grannarnas trots att man har samma mätt och rumsform att hålla sig till.”
countryside was expressed in the magazine. In 1940, 39 percent of the Swedes lived on farms, while in 1960 the number had dropped to 13.8 percent.\footnote{Hirdman, Lundberg, and Björkman, *Sveriges historia 1920-1965*, 446. Parliament’s decision in 1947 to rationalize agriculture came to influence agricultural politics for more than 40 years. The idea was to raise the country to self-sufficiency after the war, which required that enterprising farmers affirm the possibilities of a modern society.}

As hundreds of thousands of people left the small farms of the countryside and as suburbs developed at a rapid pace, *Allt i Hemmet* raised the debate about large-scale housing projects in the new suburbs in the early 1960s.\footnote{In addition to the articles discussed above, there were editorials criticizing high-rise apartment buildings in new suburbs, in part favoring one-family houses with a garden: Gunnel Nyblom-Holmberg, “Rötter i jorden,” *Allt i Hemmet* 6, no. 2 (1961): 13; Bertil Arwidson, “Los Angeles i Uppland?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 9, no. 1 (1964): 12-13; Marianne Fredriksson, “Föstrår barn Bartók?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 10, no. 1 (1965): 13; Marianne Fredriksson, “Att bo bättre,” *Allt i Hemmet* 11, no. 6 (1966): 3; and articles such as: Inger Florin, “Nej, jag känner inte grannfrun...,” *Allt i Hemmet* 5, no. 12 (1960): 44-45; Inger Florin, “Vill ni bo så här?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 6, no. 5 (1961): 54-57; Inger Florin, “Varför?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 7, no. 10 (1962): 14-19, 76. The latter compares “hostile mastodonie buildings” in the new suburbs, such as a planned 25-story building in Täby outside Stockholm, with idyllic new towns in England. In 1958, however, there was an article with a more positive view, about being a “mother on the 20th floor,” stating that a survey in Vällingby of 140 mothers in low-rise and 140 in high-rise buildings showed an even result between the two modes of living. Birgit Sunesson, “Mamma i 20:e våningen,” *Allt i Hemmet* 3, no. 2 (1958): 10-11.} On the cover of the first issue of 1962, a little girl sits by the window, leaning her head in her hands and looking out on the high-rise buildings around her. (Fig. 8.24) Her red dress and blue apron, the ribbons around her plaits, the red curtain, and her one-eyed teddy bear in a basket give a sense of comfort and warmth, contrasting with the cold blue atmosphere of the 15-story apartment buildings she sees from her window. Dressed as she is, the little girl could be taken from a Carl Larsson painting, a reference that strengthens the magazine’s questioning of the lack of tradition, context, and cozy atmosphere that the inhabitants experienced in many of these new housing developments. Using Gothenburg, Sweden’s second biggest city, as an example, the magazine depicted the scene as “the excavators that now devour
farmland among red cottages in Västra Frölunda, where one is building a peculiar new city for 100,000 inhabitants.”113 The critical tone of the article continued in the caption to a picture of the model of the suburb: “The new city could have been placed on Mars or the Moon ... But it is not Martians who will populate these concrete colossi, it is humans like you and me . . . This will be downtown for 100,000 people. Would you feel at home here?”114 This is an example of how early Allt i Hemmet was in discussing and criticizing the new developments in city planning and housing in the suburbs, a debate that many critics joined around 1970.115 For a magazine ostensibly dedicated to interior design, Allt i Hemmet was particularly involved in current issues of society.

In telling the story of the great shift from the countryside and the problems of adjusting to the city, Allt i Hemmet captured the reality of the time. The literature on twentieth-century city planning and dwellings focuses on exhibitions, great achievements, and milestones, such as the modern suburb of Vällingby, but it pays little attention to the sense of displacement that many endured.116 This lack of nuance in the literature contrasts with the voice of Allt i Hemmet, which presented a more balanced view.

114 Ibid., 17. Swedish text: “Den nya staden kunde ha legat på Mars eller på månen... men det är inte marsinvånare, som ska befolka dessa betongkolosser, det är människor som ni och jag . . . Det här blir centrum för 100.000 människor. Skulle man trivas här?”
In an article from 1961, the magazine featured a woman from a small farm in the north trying to adjust to the suburb of high-rise buildings. Like her, many people still lived in rural areas without a toilet, hot water, or other modern facilities. When we meet this woman, she sits down for coffee in the cafeteria next to the supermarket, while her husband is at work and her daughter in school:

Now she sits here in the city in a palace of stone and glass while the automatic washing machine in the basement of the high-rise does the laundry for her. And saves time, which will be used ... yes, for what? ... To walk here in the plastic, in the paradise of tile, in the stainless kingdom of heaven and still feel drawn to something else. She must be crazy! ... Is she sitting here longing to return to the red-painted house up there in the village in the forest, she, who has a bathroom and toilet and tiles and stainless and God knows what? And last but not least, a parquet floor and TV and soft carpets.

The woman recalls her previous rural life of hardship and joy—with a couple of cows, a pig, her husband working in the forest with an unstable income, socks to mend, rag rugs to weave, hard work doing laundry in the cowshed during the winter. But it was beautiful, set on a lake in the summer, where they also went dancing and picked cloudberries. She misses all that was alive and warm, the different smells, good and bad, and the feeling of her feet on a forest trail. Feeling the new, standardized and neutral smell, with the dead ground under her feet, she wonders “Does one have to lose so much to make it better? Does one have to create a concrete hell for humankind in order to raise

118 Ibid. Swedish text: “Nu sitter hon här i stan i ett palats av sten och glas medan automatmaskinen i höghusets källare sköter tvätten för henne. Och spar tiden, som skall användas ... ja, till vad? ... Gå här i plasten, i kakelparatiset, i det rostfria himmelriket och ändå känna en sugning efter något annat. Hon är väl inte riktigt klok! ... Sitter hon och längtar tillbaka till den rödfärgade käken där uppe i skogsbyn, hon som fått badrum och toalett och kakel och rostfritt och gud vet allt. Parkett och TV och mjuka mattor inte att förglömma.”
the standard? Does one have to lie for oneself and think that the paradise of tile is heaven
and not a cell that paralyzes one’s energy?”

On one hand, the woman is rather dismissive about the higher standard and
everything new, but on the other hand she realizes that the family has chosen security and
the possibilities that come with it, the standardization and convenience, which has
become her family’s world. As she states, “One must try to accept concrete giants and
pavingstone, glass, tile, and plastic, as long as one has a spot of one’s own.”

The article does not explain her husband’s work, but the new possibilities of
education and an industry’s well-paid employment with regulated hours would have
attracted many people to move from the countryside, as economic historian Maths
Isacson has argued regarding the rapid depopulation of the countryside. Referring to the
push-and-pull factors of migration, he points out that researchers focusing on “push
factors” emphasize that rationalization pushed people away from the countryside, while
others highlight the “pull factors” such as attractive work opportunities outside
agriculture. Aware that they had chosen the security of regular pay and new living
possibilities, the woman in the story will put up with all the modern facilities and new
materials, although the environment seems dull in comparison to her country background.

119 Ibid., 75. Swedish text: “Måste man förlora så mycket för att få det bättre? Måste man göra ett
betonghelvete för människan för att skapa högre standard? Måste man ljuga för sej själv och tycka att
kakelparadiset är ett himmelrike och inte en cell som förömar ens handlingskraft?”
120 Ibid. Swedish text: “Betongjättar och stenplattor, glas, kakel och plast fick man försöka uthärda, bara
man hade en egen fläck att ty sig till.”
121 Maths Isacson, Industrisamhället Sverige – arbete, ideal och kulturav (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2007),
54-55.
Through this story, Sunesson captures the “unsolvable opposition,” which Birgitta Holm, professor of literature, has described as: “On the one hand, a common affirmation of being part of modernity, accelerated by economic boom, technical progress, and industry’s need for a labor force. On the other hand, the final erasing of the form of life that has characterized the country: the classic small farm.” The sense of loss expressed by the woman in the article, asking if she had to lie to herself that the modern suburb was paradise, represented a common theme in Swedish postwar popular culture. For decades, many novels, movies, and television series featured the move from the countryside to the city and the trauma of urbanization as related to the structural transformation of Sweden. It is also in this context that the idealization of the home of Karin and Carl Larsson and his paintings should be considered.

Moving from the countryside to the new suburb, the woman has not only lost her connection to the soil but also her role as an active producer. Even though it meant hard work and little income, she had a job to do on the farm. In the article, she reflected on the automatic washing machine that allowed her to spend less time doing laundry, the plastic varnish that meant cleaning the floor less frequently, the quickly made beds in the

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123 Ibid., 447-50, giving examples such as Ivar Lo-Johansson’s *Kungsgatan* (1935), Sara Lidman’s *Tjärösdalen* (1953), Sven Delblanc’s *Hedeblad* (1970-76), the movies *Driver dagg, faller regn* (1946), *Hon dansade en sommar* (1951), and the singer Snoddas. When I grew up, the popular television series *Hem till byn* (1971-2006) captured the depopulation of the countryside and the agricultural policies. It became Sweden’s longest-running television series.
morning, and, she ironically ends her reverie with a sigh: “there is not a speck of dust in paradise!”

In this way, the article conveys a critique of the housewife’s role in the early 1960s. As rationalization and new materials had reduced heavy household work, she wondered how she would use the time the washing machine saved. The real problem for the woman was that she was not working outside the home. Questioning the new suburbs in this context, *Allt i Hemmet* wondered in another article why they were not planned with proper collective services for childcare, cleaning, laundry, and so on, at a time when more and more women wanted to go out on the labor market. With a rallying cry for change, Inger Florin concluded the article: “But let us cry out—preferably through our big organizations, women’s organizations,” parents’, tenants’, taxpayers’, and all the rest. The discussion was beginning, and the word “gender role” would soon be part of the debate in society.

An early example occurred in 1961, when the young liberal politician Eva Moberg referred to housewives as prostitutes sanctioned by society and asked that marriage be abolished as a means of support; this view was radical at the time, but it paved the way for the women’s movement of the 1970s. The real break for the housewife came with the rapid development of the public sector later in the 1960s and early 1970s, when hundreds of thousands of women started working in the expanding field of care for children and the

124 Ibid., 14-15, 75. Swedish text: “Inte ett dammkorn i paradiset!”
126 Ibid. Swedish text: “Men låt oss skrika — helst genom våra stora organisationer, kvinnoorganisationer, Målsmännens riksförbund, Hyresgästernas riksförbund, Skattebetalarnas förening och alla de andra.”
elderly, in schools, and hospitals, and with new laws on individual taxation and social insurance.\textsuperscript{127}

The ideal interior with its cozy atmosphere evoking a rural and manor house ideal filled a need at a time of change in the 1960s, and \textit{Allt i Hemmet} discussed the discontented sense of rootlessness felt by the new inhabitants of the suburbs already in the early 1960s. At the same time, in discussing the life of women in the new suburbs, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} was an early voice in a growing debate about gender roles.

\textsuperscript{127} Hirdman, Lundberg, and Björkman, \textit{Sveriges historia 1920-1965}, 582.
Chapter Nine

Dreaming of a Bedroom of One’s Own

Where kitchens had received the most attention in the 1950s, the bedroom became the focus for design innovation and advice in the 1960s. In the same way, if the parlor was still discussed and even favored by Allt i Hemmet in the 1950s, then the bedroom as a space for adults became the object of discussion in the 1960s. In contrast to the longstanding norm of small apartments with only one bedroom, God bostad stated in 1964, “it is desirable that everyone have a bedroom of one’s own,” anticipating the arrival of a new standard to address overcrowding in the home.¹ As we have seen with the living room, official advice for the bedroom sought to find practical and reasonable solutions, while Ikea dared to break the rules and Allt i Hemmet continued its mission to personalize the standardized home furnishing ideals moving in a more informal direction.

The new standard came in the mid 1960s, making a two-bedroom apartment the minimum size for a family dwelling.² Increasing construction, especially when the Million Program began in 1965, radically reduced the number of Swedes who lacked enough room in their dwellings. The new standard addressed cramped living conditions, reducing the number of those with inadequate space from 43 percent of the population in

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1960 to only 7 percent in 1975. The housing board in this period gave greater attention to bedroom space by changing the official function of the dwelling from “preparing appropriate sleeping places” in 1960 to “requiring . . . undisturbed sleeping places” in 1964. The word undisturbed is key, paving the way for more private bedrooms and a new norm: “It is desirable that everyone has a bedroom of one’s own.” In practice this did not mean that adults living together as couples should expect separate bedrooms. Rather, the expectation was that nobody would need to sleep in either the kitchen or the living room, except in the case of single-person households. This chapter will consider these

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3 Boverket, Trägbodhett – skillnaderna kvarstår, memorandum from Boverket, published December 20, 2004, https://www.boverket.se/sv/om-boverket/publicerat-av-boverket/publikationer/2004/trangboddhet---skillnaderna-kvarstar/, 2. Supplement to the report Många mål – få medel. Boverkets utvärdering av statliga stöd till bostadsbygget 1993-2004 by the public authority on housing, Boverket. By the mid 1980s, 4 percent of the population had too limited space according to the second standard of overcrowding in the home. Aiming at giving each child a room of his or her own, a third standard came in 1974, establishing a maximum of one person per room, except cohabiting adults, apart from the kitchen and another room, thus making the minimum dwelling for a family with two children a three-bedroom apartment; such a dwelling would not be officially counted as limited in space. Since the mid 1980s, around 15 percent of the population remains spatially limited, according to standard 3, with higher rates among young people, single parents, and immigrants. Ibid., 2, 6-9. In 2019, the Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionen) published a report stating that overcrowding in the home according to standard 3 has increased during the past twenty years, especially among first generation immigrants, from 29 to 37 percent. The result, however, does not influence the health or school results of these families. The audit office finds standard 3 to be generous and recommends that the government evaluate its purpose and use, as it has not been employed as it had been intended when it was adopted. The National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen), for example, applies a stricter interpretation of overcrowding when providing allowances. Riksrevisionen, Trägbodhett - konsekvenser för hälsa och skolresultat, RIR 2019:9 (Stockholm: Riksrevisionen, 2019), 5-7.

4 Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad 1960, 8. Swedish text: “Bostadens dagfunktioner är att . . . dess nattfunktion att bereda lämpliga sovplatser”. Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1964), 8. Swedish text: “Bostadens dagfunktioner kräver . . . dess nattfunktioner ostörda sovplatser . . . Önskvärt är att alla kan få var sitt sovrum.” A further strengthening of the requirement in God bostad is the wording “under all circumstances” (“under alla omständigheter”) as an addition to the sentence that there should be a maximum of two people sleeping per room. Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad (1964), 8. Since 1954, God bostad expected that children over twelve years of age, boys and girls equally, should have separate bedrooms, but the new statement further emphasized a room of one’s own.

5 There had been a gradual change. The 1960 God bostad stated that “normally nobody needs to sleep in the kitchen or the living room,” where the word normally strengthened the aim, established in the 1954 God bostad, in which the living room would preferably be free from sleeping places. Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad 1960, 25. Swedish text: “Rumsantalet bör vara så stort att inte mer än två personer behöver ligga i samma rum, att barn över tolv år av skilda kön kan ha skilda sovrum och att ingen normalt behöver ligga i kök eller vardagsrum.”
developments as they sought to reduce cramped sleeping conditions and generally improve living spaces in Sweden.

**The Double Bed**

The double bed came to symbolize all that the advisory literature was against: impractical, unhygienic, bulky, and expensive. In the Co-op’s 1960s editions of *Sätta bo*, Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin expressed her disapproval: “Even the double bed has become fashionable, and in exhibitions and magazines there are often romantic arrangements with an airy canopy on high posts as a veil over the bed. And a double bed can in many ways seem ideal for a couple who just fell in love, but still, it is not completely ideal.”

Arguments for rational decision-making were in the ascendant in this period, and, if someone thought about buying a double bed, *Bosättning* provided a range of questions: “Is there a proper place for such a bulky piece of furniture in the apartment?” with the practical reminder in parenthesis: “(It should be able to be made from both long sides).”

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6 Henrikson-Abelin, *Sätta bo* (1962 and 1965), 28. Swedish text: “Det har till och med blivit modernt med dubbelsängar och på utställningar och i tidskrifter ser man ofta romantiska arrangemang med luftig sänghimmel på höga stolpar som en slöja över bäddden. Och visst kan en dubbelsäng på många sätt tyckas idealisk för ett nyförälskat par. Men helt idealisk är den kanske ändå inte.” Regarding the canopy, on the cover of no. 11, 1961, *Allt i Hemmet* featured such a bed with posts and a rosy canopy, in which a young woman is lying under her quilt reading a magazine. The wallpaper is light blue with large white flowers and the carpet is white and fluffy, further adding to the romantic atmosphere of the interior, designed by Lena Larsson. Inside the issue, there were 17 pages of suggestions for bedrooms and consumer guidance regarding beds and bed linen. In another 14-page feature on beds, *Allt i Hemmet* showed a full spread with a four-poster bed with blue checkered canopy and bedspread, along with flounces and fluffy white carpets on the floor and a wicker chair and chest of drawers painted orangy red, all under the heading “For her.” The magazine, however, made it clear that it was “obviously not an economic purchase, but we really wanted to show something to dream about and be inspired by, maybe with the romantic flair of Hollywood and the Wild West.” Swedish text: “Himmelssängen ‘Öfverman’ kan naturligtvis inte räknas som ett ekonomiskt köp men vi ville så gärna visa något att drömma om och inspireras av, låt vara att det är en romantisk fläkt av Hollywood och Vilda Västern.” Maj-Britt Oldin, “Vad kostar det att sova skönt?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 9, no. 2 (1964): 28-29. The reference came from TV series such as *Bonanza* (known as *Bröderna Cartwright* in Swedish), which was popular in Sweden at the time.
The question represented an underlying doubt that the double bed offered a workable solution, since its 150 cm would actually take up less space than two normal 90 cm twin beds. The official setting-up-home brochure continued with more questions, seeking to show how complicated it would be to share the same bed: “How much would extra-wide bed linen cost to buy and care for—and are sheets of the right dimensions even available? Is it possible to arrange a reserve bed in case of illness? Do both partners have the same morning and evening habits?”

The state, the Co-op, and Bra Bohag all had the same practical solution: get one wider bed as a comfortable joint bed and one ordinary bed, so that the wider bed could accommodate small children who seek mother’s comfort. In addition, Bra bohag’s Bo bättre, trivas mera introduced the need for working in bed as an argument for a wider bed, a new idea at the time. Different sleeping habits and illness were further arguments against the double bed; if one still wanted a double bed, Bra bohag concluded that it must be possible to arrange a third sleeping place. Challenging the official advice, Ikea had sold double beds since 1958.

Even in their large 14-page feature on bedrooms in 1964, Allt i Hemmet viewed the double bed hesitantly. Revealing the expected gender roles of the time, the magazine featured a story with three versions of the same bedroom. (Fig. 9.1) At first, newlyweds

7 Krantz-Jensen, Bosättning (1965), 17. Swedish text: “Finns det lämplig plats för en så skrymmande möbel i lägenheten? (Den bör kunna bäddas från båda långsidorna.) Vad kostar extrabreda sängkläder i pengar och skötsel – och finns de alls att köpa på platsen? Går det att ordna reservsovplats vid sjukdom? Har båda parter samma kvälls- och morgonvanor?” The suggested beds were one 80-90 cm and one 100-110 cm, instead of two 90 cm, rather than a double bed of at least 150 cm.
8 Ibid., 17; Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962 and 1965), 28.
9 Tarschys and Tarschys-Block, “Köpa möbler,” 30. A couple of years later, Larsson and Svedberg, under the heading “the bedroom to dream of,” also mentioned people who work in bed who might need a bookshelf, long telephone cord, etc. Larsson and Svedberg, Heminredning (1965), 91.
10 Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog -58, 52.
share a double bed: “But double beds are large and bulky furniture, and who knows how one wants to furnish in the future and then what to do with such an enormous bed? They are expensive as well.” Then, when the baby arrives, father moves out to get some sleep and allow the mother to be with the baby. She transforms her dressing table into a nursing table, obviously chosen as an ideal multipurpose work table, following the advisory literature. By this time, she has also replaced the fluffy carpets with “an easier-to-handle, less dust-collecting rag rug.” Then, when the child moves to her own room, father returns with his own, narrower bed, and the mother stays in the wider bed, as she has had a hard time and needs a comfortable bed, which can accommodate the child when needed.  

The Dressing Table

The ideal bedroom was practical and work oriented. The rational argumentation of Bra bohag’s Bo bättre, trivas mera captures the Swedish ideal of the early 1960s. Noting that turned beds, flowery curtains, and wallpaper had returned, design experts Rebecka Tarschys and Hedvig Hedqvist urged readers: “But weigh the bedroom of your heart and the need for a matter-of-fact dayroom where the working table is more important than the

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11 Marguerite Walfridson, text, and Ingald Andersson, interiors, “Vårt mest förtroliga rum,” Allt i Hemmet 9, no. 11 (1964): 36-37. Swedish text: “Men dubbelsängar är stora och skrymmande möbler, vem vet hur man vill möblera i framtiden och vad skall man då ta sig till med en sådan jättesäng? Dyra är de också. . . . De grekiska ryamattorna tas under denna tid bort, i stället ligger det en mera lättskött och mindre dammsamlande trasmatta på golvet.” In their 17-page feature on bedrooms, beds, and bed linen in 1961, Allt i Hemmet included an article confirming the availability of sheets, quilts, and blankets for a double bed on the Swedish market, including wide sheets imported from America. As in other sources, the magazine emphasized the hygienic argument for an extra bed in case of illness as a precondition for having a double bed, in addition to accounting for similar sleeping habits, a width of at least 140-150 cm, and a precaution that it might be complicated to make the bed unless it can be placed perpendicular to the wall. In this article, however, Allt i Hemmet did include a couple of sentences on the personal advantages of a double bed: the extra contact and warmth it gives, the potential for a shorter way to reconciliation—all statements that are not included in the setting-up-home literature. Maj-Britt Oldin, “Nu slipper vi bädda dubbelt i dubbelsängen,” Allt i Hemmet 6, no. 11 (1961): 46-47.
dressing table and in which the doors to the living room can stay open.”

The official ideal was to have a practical working table in the bedroom, preferably for sewing, as described and depicted in *Bosättning* in 1955 and again in 1965. In the later version, however, the illustrator included a mirror and a basket with toiletries among the sewing equipment. The promoted ideal was above all practical and flexible: use for personal adornment was acceptable only if combined with a multipurpose workspace.

The Co-op featured the same idea, with a sewing machine, nail polish, and other beauty products neatly placed together on the same practical work surface. (Fig. 9.2) In another image, however, the beauty function is made clear with perfume bottles, a jewelry box, a couple of small bowls, and a mirror on the wall. (See fig. 6.14) Even this was still not a proper dressing table; instead, it was a board set on two chests of drawers from the minutely researched storage series *Contenta*, and so once again a surface that could be transformed for other types of work. A similar bedroom storage series, showing drawers for sewing notions as well as beauty products and described as possessing “the right measurements, right function, and highest quality,” was depicted in the 1960–1961 *Bra bohag* catalog. In the 1961 *Ikea* catalog, the dressing table was part of a suite comprising the utilitarian, multipurpose work and storage series *Tore*.

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12 Tarschys and Tarschys-Block, “Köpa möbler,” 34. Swedish text: “Men väg sovrummet i ert hjärta mot behovet av ett sakligt dagrum där arbetsbordet är viktigare än toalettbordet och dit dörarna från vardagsrummet kan stå öppna.” The chapter on how to furnish different rooms follows the same idea and includes working boards that can serve as dressing, nursing, or work table. Sandegård, “Något om möblering,” 16-17.
15 *Bra bohag*, *Bra bohag* 1960-1961, 9, 11. Swedish text: “rätt mått, rätt funktion och högsta kvalitet.” The storage series was *Öresund* by Danish designer Børge Mogensen. The catalog featured a dressing table in a bedroom later in the catalog, such as on page 32.
The dressing table—a small table with a mirror intended to aid bodily adornment, with its historic link to the female sphere of an eighteenth-century boudoir—contradicted the rational and practical ideal for the Swedish home in the 1960s. Although the eighteenth century was favorably reappraised in the 1960s, it was not the Rococo, but the Gustavian style, firmly rooted in a cherished classicism. In America, the dressing table had had a revival in the late nineteenth century, becoming a regular part of popular bedroom suites in the interwar years. In the Swedish practical and work-oriented ideal, the dressing table was not promoted in the advisory publications; however, it was widely featured in the commercial Ikea and Bra bohag catalogs, including Malmsten’s bedroom suites.

The Bedroom as a Gendered Room

While the Co-op and Bra bohag dismissed what they called romantic bedroom interiors, Ikea cherished soft and flowery home furnishings. The focus was on the

17 Lichtman, “‘Teenagers Have Taken Over the House,’” 157.
18 The Ikea catalog included dressing tables for the first time in 1954, Mona, Antoinette, and Laila, on page 79, but they were not depicted with a bedroom suite. In the 1955 catalog, “the ultramodern” dressing table Antoinette was shown with the bedroom suite Exița as the only example of a dressing table seen in a bedroom, 55. An Ikea bedroom suite at the time included two twin beds, two bedside tables, a chest of drawers, and two chairs (or chair and stool). The Bra bohag catalog included dressing tables from 1958. The 1961 Ikea catalog had two pages of dressing tables, the 1964 had four pages, and by 1965, the Ikea catalog included ten different dressing tables, indicative of their increasing popularity. There were roughly as many pages of dressing tables as kitchens that year. From 1962 on, Ike featured dressing tables in its bedroom interiors. For Malmsten dressing tables in bedroom suites, see for example Bra bohag catalogs 1962/63, 8; 63/64, 18. In Sweden, throughout the 1920s, the washstand had remained part of a bedroom suite, as modern bathrooms only became common later. On the washstand, there could be two large bowls and two jars for water, one set each for husband and wife. Olsson, “Rokoko eller funkis,” 64.
19 The 1963 Ikea catalog described one of four bedroom interiors as particularly romantic, introducing the new white-lacquered suite Särna designed by Gillis Lundgren: “A little romanticism, yes, look at the beautiful dressing table with the oval mirror and the decorative profile of the bedsteads,” pointing out the chintz bedspread Gardenia printed with “a romantic flowery pattern,” and furthering the romantic theme by displaying a bouquet of roses in a vase, perfume, and nail polish on the dressing table. Möbel-Ikea, Katalog
bedroom, when Ikea began showing interiors in the first pages of its catalogs in 1961.\textsuperscript{20}

Out of ten interiors in total, six related to bedrooms. While the Ikea catalog presented the furnishings of the featured living rooms as comfortable, flexible, and easy to clean without talking about gender, there was a different approach in describing the bedrooms. Ikea’s 1961 bedroom, intended for a young couple with a baby, featured teak furniture by Danish architect Arne Wahl Iversen with straight lines and plain surfaces. (Fig. 9.3)

While the austere style made the bedroom “masculine,” according to the catalog, it apparently needed to be softened: “Soft carpets, woolly blankets, and a richly pleated, flowery curtain soften the tone of this strict and matter-of-factly modern room, in which even a man should feel comfortable.”\textsuperscript{21} It was clear from this passage that soft and flowery decor would automatically be considered feminine. Design historian Penny Sparke has pointed out that this type of argument is part of a masculinist modernist canon, aligning with modernist avant-garde and high culture, and thereby casting femininity as appealing to emotion and representing something other than “good taste” or “good design.”\textsuperscript{22}

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\textsuperscript{20} An indication that the bedroom had become more important was a change in Ikea’s 20 questions customers could reply to in order to receive help with their interior design. Until 1959, Ikea asked “If you have an apartment with two rooms, could you imagine utilizing one room only as a bedroom?”, making it sound as if it would not be an obvious choice. In 1960, the question was phrased in a more neutral way: “Do you wish to use one of the rooms as a bedroom?”, Ikea catalogs 1959, 126, and 1960, 156. Swedish text: “Om Ni har en tvårummare, skulle Ni då kunna tänka Er att disponera ett rum enbart som sovrum?” and “Önskar Ni disponera ett av rummen som sovrum?” Ikea used the 20 questions in the catalogs through 1963.

\textsuperscript{21} Möbel-Ikéa, \textit{Katalog 1961}, 20. Swedish text: “Mjuka mattor, ulliga filtar och en rikt veckad, blommig gardin mjukar upp tonen i detta strikta och sakligt moderna rum, som till och med en karl bör kunna trivas i.” The comparison is akin to \textit{Allt i Hemmet}’s 1957 feature “Dad sleeps in mother’s room,” in which a romantically feminine bedroom contrasted with the living room. (See fig. 4.3)

\textsuperscript{22} Sparke, \textit{As Long As It’s Pink}, 204-208.

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In gendering the bedroom, IKEA evoked the 1880s in contrast to the modernist ideal. For the second bedroom in the 1961 catalog, IKEA had turned the space into “mother’s lovely oasis of her own” by adding a comfortable upholstered armchair for reading or handicrafts, a dressing table, a small table on wheels for her knitting projects, newspapers, magazines, books, and other activities. (Fig. 9.4) “It has the slight note of the 80s that we have come to appreciate more and more in our otherwise so sober and matter-of-fact time,” as the IKEA catalog explained the representation of soft textiles and the presence of flowers. The interior features a personal collection of jewelry and pictures of roses on the wall above the dressing table; tulips arranged in a bowl; a wooden case with built-in mirror; and cosmetic products on the table, along with passementerie decorating the lampshades, a light purple blanket with fringe thrown on the twin beds; soft, light yellow bedside carpets; and the rounded shape of the armchair making up a room that IKEA “thinks will appeal to a slightly romantic female heart.”23 While the room is intentionally furnished for her needs, the only thing visible on his side of the bed is a radio on top of a set of wall-mounted bedside drawers.

23 Möbel-Ikéa, Katalog 1961, 22. Swedish text: “Sin egen ljuvliga oas . . . tror vi skall tilltala ett smått romantiskt kvinnohjärta. Det har den svaga ton från ett svunnet 80-tal som vi kommit att mer och mer uppskatta i vår annars så nyktra och sakliga tid.” Bra bohag had also featured the bedroom as a place to withdraw to, showing two women in the bedroom, probably on a house tour, and a silhouette of a man watching them talking: “When I want to rest and really relax a while, I bring a book or a piece of needlework and sit down in the bedroom! We have furnished it as the parents’ own private corner.” In comparison to IKEA, there are no references to a room being feminine, and the modern Dux armchair next to her is gray and shaped organically with metal legs. Bra bohag, Bra bohag 1959-1960, back page. Swedish text: “När jag vill vila mej och ha det riktigt lugnt och skönt en stund, då tar jag en bok eller ett handarbete och sätter mej i sovrummet! Det har vi möblerat som föräldrarnas egen privata vrå”. The idea to show a bedroom as a place to withdraw to might be a concept that Brita Svenonius-Lang brought with her from Bra bohag’s catalog productions to IKEA’s in 1961. This was also the idea behind Lena Larsson’s bedroom in “Dad sleeps in mother’s room” in chapter four. Fredriksson and Lena Larsson, “Pappa sover i mammans rum” (1957).
Referring to the 1880s, Ikea evoked a time when the Swedish bourgeoisie preferred to furnish parlors in a Rococo revival style full of elaborate draperies and upholstered furniture with fringe. It was not a coincidence that Ikea chose the bedroom to be more feminine with references to the nineteenth century, a time when the bourgeois housewife could set her feminine culture and aesthetic free in the parlor and the bedroom. “It was the least utilitarian and most symbolic of the house’s spaces, the place where social ritual was most fully enacted,” Sparke explains.  

In a Swedish context, the modernist aversion to the interior decoration of the high bourgeoisie of the 1880s was used as a horror example in contrast to modern living rooms for simple family life, as in Gregor Paulsson’s Hur bo for the Co-op in 1934. Ikea was certainly aware of these taste-making efforts by the leader of the SSF, and the company continued to challenge the “official” taste, thereby taking a stand for the taste of “ordinary people” as it did in the 1950s with the launch of its questionnaire for interior design help.

For Paulsson, however, the “feminine” was not the problem with the 1880s interior. Rather, he felt that it suited the entertainment of the high bourgeoisie, who had made a fortune through industrialization “at the speed of a stroke of lightning” instead of cultivating a tradition through centuries. According to Paulsson: “Of course it wanted to show what they had. It liked splendor, but had not learned how to deal with it moderately. Therefore, bragging and garishness came to typify the forms of the nineteenth century.”

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24 Sparke, *As Long As It’s Pink*, 46.
The statement also indicates the long tradition of rational and thoughtful consumption as an ideal in Sweden where quality and “timelessness” are valued over conspicuous display.

**Personalizing the Standardized Bedroom**

In their large feature on bedrooms in 1964, *Allt i Hemmet* went beyond the commercial notion of a woman’s bedroom to showcasing a multipurpose space as a place to which adults may withdraw. The feature was another example of the magazine’s constant drive to personalize the standardized, and once again the modern apartment buildings in anonymous suburbs were the focus: “Everywhere, the suburbs look the same, the houses built after the same model, the streets winding as impersonally.”

As in the case of living rooms, the article noted that bedrooms also look the same in the standardized apartment building, that the beds and bedside tables are placed the same way from apartment to apartment in the whole building.

Once again, *Allt i Hemmet* promoted furnishing according to one’s needs and against expected conventions. The magazine now went full circle and made a point of decorating the bedroom in a more masculine way, questioning women who just want “sheer curtains with flounces, long-haired pastel-colored carpets on the floor, and rosebuds on the wallpaper. But how does it go for the man in such a pronounced feminine room? Is he unhappy or does he really feel at home?” the writer asks, rhetorically stating that, “a bedroom does not have to be light and airy at all in its character for a woman to feel...

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comfortable.”27 The result was a suite of bedroom furniture in reddish wood, turned frames, blue-and-white bedspreads, a tall chest of drawers, and a dark-green-and-red-checkered wing chair with a green lamp along with a green carpet and light green walls. (Fig. 9.5) A more somber palette and a wing chair were all the magazine needed to call the interior “a bit masculine.”

The interior itself is not of interest here, rather it is the concept that the bedroom of a couple was considered a gendered room at all, and was apparently an important way to frame discussion of a bedroom at this time. The bedroom became a free zone, opposed to the living room, which was ideally dominated by the current modernist style of functional, matter-of-fact teak furniture. The magazine felt that even a fairly neutral interior should be called “masculine” so as to neutralize any hint of femininity, thus making it understood that the ideal was masculine.

If Allt i Hemmet in the 1950s defended the need for a parlor to display precious objects and serve as a space for adults in the evening, the magazine did not discuss such a room in the 1960s. Instead, it introduced the bedroom as the room with that purpose. Whereas Ikea and Bra bohag had promoted the bedroom as a room in which the woman could have her comfortable armchair to relax in with a book or knitting project, Allt i

27 Ibid., 43. Swedish text: “Det finns kvinnor, som inte kan tänka sig ett sovrum utan tunna, volangprydda gardiner, långhåriga, pastellfärgade mattor på golvet och rosenknapppsmönster på tapeten. Men hur går det för mannen i ett så utpräglat feminint rum? Vantrivs han eller trivs han kanske alldeles utmärkt? Varför inte inreda alldeles tvärt om för en gångs skull? Ett sovrum behöver inte alls vara enbart lätt och luftigt till sin karaktär för att en kvinna skall kunna trivas i det.” The furniture was part of the series Familjen by Kerstin Hörlin-Holmqvist. Further expressing their aversion to the conventional placement of bedroom furniture were Lena Larsson and Elias Svedberg in their 1965 edition of Heminredning, an argument spread in Allt i Hemmet since the 1950s: “The master bedroom may not be furnished in a deadlocked way. It is unreasonable to presuppose a ‘twin furnishing’ with exactly repeated furnishing around the beds.” Swedish text: “Det gemensamma sovrummet får inte ha en alltför fastläst möblering. Det är orimligt att förutsätta en ‘tvillingmöblering’ med exakt upprepad möblering kring sängarna.” Larsson and Svedberg, Heminredning (1965), 89.
*Hemmet* further neutralized the gendering of the bedroom by suggesting it as a place where the parents could watch television, listen to records, read, and relax, while the living room was occupied by nice, though loud, teenagers. (Fig. 9.6) Under the heading “Laid-back and middle aged,” the magazine featured a bedroom with matching twin beds in bright orange and hot pink, with many pillows, placed at an angle with a tea trolley nearby, a warm red light, and a television next to the dressing table, which also served as a writing desk. Small bookshelves for current books were on hand. Wall-to-wall carpeting and warm colors created a cozy atmosphere.\(^{28}\) In comparison to the parlor type of rooms with the fine sofa and precious objects that *Allt i Hemmet* had promoted in the 1950s, this “laid-back” interior presented a more informal living space and created a truly private living room for the parents, where they could lie in bed drinking tea and watching television at the same time.

By presenting a bedroom serving as a living room—but also as a private space dedicated to the couple and not for guests, with beds and many pillows but no sofa—*Allt i Hemmet* contributed to promoting a more informal lifestyle that overturned previous conventions of how to sit properly on a sofa and drink coffee in the living room while also showing the proper use of the bedroom. This was another way to personalize a room that was standardized in its size and furnishings with its traditionally placed twin beds.

The idea of the bedroom as a zone for the adults enhanced the ideal of making the teenagers want to stay at home.

Finally, in anticipation of a trend for rustic pine that grew in second half of the 1960s, *Allt i Hemmet* featured beds of pine with large turned posts. Presented as suitable for the young couple, the caption did not describe functional or rational aspects, giving instead personal characteristics to the pine beds. These showed “the obvious strength of the Nordic character, of blondness, confidence, and straightforwardness.” As in the case of the Malmsten interior, with its suggestion of “birch slopes and the little red cottage,” the blond pine allowed *Allt i Hemmet* to connect characteristics perceived as “Nordic” to the furniture in a way they had previously done with vernacular-inspired interiors. Pine, along with spruce, is the most common wood in Sweden. In contrast to the other practical arrangements for those sleeping in the living room—or the romantic four-poster bed in the same feature—the pine beds represented something new and different through their rusticity.

While the official setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning*, the Co-op, Bra bohag, and *Allt i Hemmet* promoted the ideal bedroom as practical and work oriented, Ikea once again challenged the official, more austere advice in accommodating the feminine dressing table. Furthermore, in the commercial catalogs of Ikea and Bra bohag, the bedroom was decorated as a room with a conventionally feminine touch, while *Allt i Hemmet* continued their promotion of personalizing the standardized and conventional ways of furnishing different rooms. In the 1950s, the magazine had promoted the parlor

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29 Oldin, “Vad kostar det att sova skönt?,” 32-33. Swedish text: “den självklara styrkan hos det nordiska kynnet, av blondheten, tryggheten, och rättframheten.” The beds were designed by artist Erik Höglund.
as a place to retreat for the adults, but in the 1960s they no longer spoke of the parlor, rather suggesting the bedroom as a “laid-back” retreat for the adults while the teenagers took over the living room. In the second half of the 1960s, choosing goods for the home would change to a focus on youth, economy, and the unconventional.

30 Teenagers being a new consumer group in the prospering economy of the 1960s, there was a focus on teenage rooms in the various advisory media, often instilling gendered ideals of romantic girls and active boys, but even Ikea kept their representations within a wholesome limit. Further, Allt i Hemmet saw their seemingly free competition to design the ideal teenage room as a way of fostering a younger generation with wholesome ideals focusing on practicality. See for example “Så möblerar vi tonårslyan,” Allt i Hemmet 4, no. 10 (1959): 38-41; Marianne Fredriksson and Lena Larsson, “Romantiken blommar i tonårslyan,” Allt i Hemmet 5, no. 2 (1960): 20; Möbel-Ikéa, Katalog 1961, 24-27.
Chapter Ten

The Rise of Ikea: Quality Control and Changing Market

It was thanks to Allt i Hemmet that Ikea grew into an important furniture retailer that appealed to a large segment of the population. At a time when ordinary furniture shops, which took pride in their expertise and service, faced the challenge of new, nontraditional retail methods, the magazine expressed fatigue with the monotonous production of furniture that made the living rooms all look the same. This chapter recounts the rise of Ikea and bridges the first and second half of the 1960s, a time of changing attitudes in consumer guidance when ideals of timeless quality and durability shifted to a focus on youth, economy, and the unconventional. A change, I will argue, in which Allt i Hemmet was a driving force.

The Turning Point for Ikea

As the magazine expanded its consumer guidance mission, Allt i Hemmet conducted a program of furniture testing for the first time in 1964. By submitting goods to stress, they measured products from various manufacturers. The results showed that Ikea’s offerings compared favorably when put up against more expensive, conventional furniture. Allt i Hemmet presented the results of its furniture investigation as “sensational,” in a cover article titled “Is expensive furniture better than cheap furniture?”¹ (Fig. 10.1) Ingvar Kamprad himself confirmed that, following years of

¹ Birgitta Ek, “Se upp med möbelpriserna!,” Allt i Hemmet 9, no. 9 (1964): 32-42. Swedish text on cover:
critique from the established furniture trade, the turning point for Ikea came thanks to Marianne Fredriksson and the 1964 article in *Allt i Hemmet*.\(^2\) Ikea had grown rapidly in the postwar era, and the results of the test gave the company an incentive to open new retail stores, first in Stockholm in 1965, and then in Sundsvall, Malmö, and Copenhagen in subsequent years.\(^3\) Each proved successful in its market.

The firm had often been treated as the “ugly duckling” by the Swedish furniture trade. The Swedish Federation of Furniture Industry (Sveriges Möbelindustriförbund) banned Ikea and Kamprad from trade fairs, in part because they feared plagiarism. The SSF refused to include advertisements from Ikea in its journal *Form*.\(^4\) Representatives of the furniture trade called for an Ikea boycott. Some suppliers maintained contact with Ikea, but they attempted to remain anonymous by using unmarked vehicles and fictitious addresses. Yet others made furniture for Ikea only if the design was clearly changed,

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\(^2\) Atle Bjarnestam, *Ikea – design och identitet*, 15. Bertil Torekull, who has interviewed Marianne Fredriksson, describes how, after hearing her colleagues’ doubts about Ikea, she visited the store in Älmhult to see what they offered with her own eyes. The test and the article grew out of her experience. Torekull, *Leading by Design*, 70-71.

\(^3\) Atle Bjarnestam, *Ikea – design och identitet*, 51. In 1963, Ikea had opened a store in Oslo, Norway.

\(^4\) Berglund, *Tala om kvalitet*, 63.
according to Kamprad. Some furniture dealers refused to trade with a company that sold the same furniture to Ikea.\textsuperscript{5}

\textit{Allt i Hemmet} and other advisory publications had been cautious in their approach to Ikea, and it was a major shift to feature Ikea in the magazine. In previous years, the editors had questioned the quality offered by the company, with one recalling “all the times we had shuddered at bad mail-order furniture smashed to smithereens and piled in people’s attics.”\textsuperscript{6} Realizing that times had changed, they picked up the Ikea catalog and discovered that a lot of the furniture looked “excellent, simple, right; that the prices were incredibly low,” and “that Ikea worked hard at testing the furniture according to the VDN. There is not one single furniture testing machine that the Society of Crafts and Design has accepted that Ikea does not have.”\textsuperscript{7}

This change was also reflected in \textit{Sätta bo}. Kerstin Henrikson-Abelin, in the first edition from 1962, dissuaded readers from buying from mail-order firms. After \textit{Allt i Hemmet} published the results of its test, she was more positive, and in the next edition advised checking the VDN labeling and return policy of such companies.\textsuperscript{8} Gunnel Petre, in Bra bohag’s book \textit{Bo bättre, trivas mera} (1963), advised young people to go to a furniture store instead of buying by mail-order.\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Allt i Hemmet} had not included the

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Torekull, \textit{Leading by design}, 45-50.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Ibid. Swedish text: “Nyfiket sökte vi fram den bortslängda katalogen, satte oss att titta. Och fann: \textit{att} en hel del av möblerna onekligen såg utmärkta ut, enkla, riktiga, \textit{att} priserna var otroligt låga . . . \textit{att} Ikea tydligen kör hårt med möbeltestningar enligt VDN. Det finns inte en möbelprovningsapparat som Slöjdföreningen har accepterat som de inte skaffat.”
\item \textsuperscript{8} Henrikson-Abelin, \textit{Sätta bo} (1962 and 1965), 21.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Petre, “Hur mycket får det kostá?,” 13.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
company in their informative setting-up-home supplement in 1962; among the 20 tables, chairs, and beds the magazine depicted, none was from Ikea.\footnote{Ek and Larsson, “Vi gifter oss!,” 4-8. Neither was Ikea included in the SSF’s advisory book on how to choose the most suitable furniture, including images of 480 pieces from the Co-op, Bra bohag and other producers. Erik Berglund and Sten Engdal, Möbelråd (Stockholm: Svenska slöjdföreningen, 1961).}  

Ikea was concerned about quality control, furniture investigator Erik Berglund recalled. At the end of the 1950s, the SSF had developed their methods to test the strength of furniture and create a grading scale of quality. They needed to test both good and bad examples, and chose Ikea as an example of one of the bad ones. In one test, two Ikea chairs fell apart after just a few bumps, or even immediately. Reassured that the testing methods were effective, Berglund included images of the Ikea failures as educational examples in the setting-up-home study circles organized by the SSF.  

When Kamprad found out about this, he called Berglund to set up a meeting. At the meeting, Kamprad explained that he wanted to sell furniture that ordinary people could afford, and Berglund thought this was the starting point for Ikea to raise the quality of its merchandise and to hire professional designers.\footnote{Berglund, Tala om kvalitet, 63-64. When the Furniture Institute (Möbelinstitutet) started in 1967, Ikea became the largest economic contributor next to the state and also the greatest supporter of the system of furniture fact labels (Möbelfakta), which was used in Ikea stores both in Sweden and abroad. In the early 1970s, Ikea established its own furniture testing laboratory in Älmhult under the leadership of engineer Bo Wadling, a former colleague of Berglund. Ibid., 64, and Kerstin Wickman, “Ett möbelhus för alla,” in Ikea på Liljevalchs konsthall 13 juni–30 augusti, Liljevalch’s catalog no. 480, ed. Staffan Bengtsson (Stockholm: Liljevalchs konsthall and Stockholms stads kulturförvaltning, 2009), n.p.} Consequently, in the 1960 catalog, Ikea invited customers to the new showroom in Älmhult and particularly encouraged visitors to take “a look at our testing machine for chairs, built according to the requirements of the VDN.” Highlighted as a sight on par with “the impressive textile collection of
hundreds of fabrics” and the “bargain section,” the “fearful ‘torture machine’ ruthlessly uncovers any weakness.”

The “torture machine” for testing chairs had real results for Ikea, which Allt i Hemmet confirmed in its groundbreaking test in 1964. The magazine bought two chairs similar to the classic Thonet model 14, presented as “the most common chair in the world” and “also called the most durable chair in the world.” The one from Ikea cost 33 kronor and was made in Poland, while the other, from a furniture shop, cost 168 kronor and was made in Sweden. Sent to the SSF’s testing laboratory, Berglund and his colleague Sten Engdal let the brutal machines determine how many times the chairs could tilt and be loaded without falling apart. They were also performing the tests for the trade description commission’s VDN labels, which had tested furniture since 1953. Similar to the scientific approach to researching kitchens, foam rubber, and other goods, they had developed methods to determine the technical quality of furniture for the benefit of consumers, methods that came to be used in many places, domestically and abroad. The lowest grade meant that the furniture almost smashed to smithereens. The highest grade was five, which indicated a chair so strong that it was suited for restaurants and youth centers.

The result from the Allt i Hemmet selection was surprising. The cheap Ikea chair was so strong that it remained intact after 50,000 tilts—it received a grade of five—whereas

12 Another recommended sight at Ikea in Älmhult was the testing machine for foam rubber, built according to international rules. Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog -60, 4. Swedish text: “Högborgen för modern svensk möbelkultur,” “vår imponerande textilkollektion med 100-tals olika tyger,” “fyndavdelningen,” and “Denna fruktansvärda ‘tortyrmaskin’ avslöjar skoningslöst eventuella svagheter.” A similar, shortened version of the text was included in the 1961 catalog, 7.
14 Berglund, Tala om kvalitet, 160.
the more expensive chair lost its screws and became wobbly, receiving a grade of two.\textsuperscript{15}

The result was the same when they controlled with a second chair. By way of explanation for its unexpectedly high quality, the Ikea chair was shown to have been produced in the old Thonet factory in Radomsko in Poland, manufacturers with experience making bentwood chairs of beech.\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Allt i Hemmet}’s testers first thought the chairs looked the same, only to acknowledge differences in the Ikea design; they questioned whether it would really be worth paying around 130 kronor more for the more handsome chair.\textsuperscript{17}

Their test suggested that, if the consumer preferred the more handsome design, they should be willing to limit its use.

The seriousness of the test became evident in the next test to be conducted. \textit{Allt i Hemmet} had chosen a couple of similar-looking armchairs with black leather cushions, one from Ikea for 427 kronor and one Danish, designed by Ole Wanscher, for 820 kronor.\textsuperscript{18} After the testing machines had pressed 250,000 times against the seats and stroked the back and armrests 80,000 times, both armchairs were still intact, earning a grade of five. A cabinetmaker working in the laboratory could admire the fine

\textsuperscript{15} Ek, “Vi lät testa några möbler,” 47.

\textsuperscript{16} Wickman, “Ett möbelhus för alla,” n.p. Poland needed Western currency, and a delegation representing 160 furniture suppliers came to Sweden in 1959 to contact Swedish dealers, but no one was interested. When Kamprad read about this in the newspaper, he decided to go to Poland and managed to solve the problems with Polish bureaucracy, planned economy, etc. This is how classic bentwood furniture and furniture made of oak came into Ikea’s catalog. It cost half as much to produce in Poland than in Sweden, and a decade later almost half of Ikeå’s furniture was made there. Ibid. By reaching out to Poland as a supplier, Ikea got around the delivery bans that Swedish producers had imposed on Ikea. The Stockaryd chair factory, for example, was one of the few suppliers that supported Ikea, but they were unable to fill an order for 40,000 wooden chairs needed by Ikea in 1961. In Poland, Kamprad also discovered Polish oak, a material that was cheaper than teak. Torekull, \textit{Leading by Design}, 57-67; Atle Bjarnestam, \textit{Ikea – design och identitet}, 47.

\textsuperscript{17} Ek, “Vi lät testa några möbler,” 46.

\textsuperscript{18} Atle Bjarnestam, \textit{Ikea – design och identitet}, 48. A Danish architect, Erik Wørts, had also designed the Ikea chair, but this went unmentioned by the magazine, which only noted that it was produced in Poland.
craftsmanship of the Danish chair and an upholsterer could admire its elegant cushions, but there was no difference in terms of leather and upholstery.

The magazine concluded that only a professional might discover and enjoy the fine workmanship in the more expensive cushions, whereas an ordinary person would see them as equal. They also asked a focus group to give their general opinion of the chairs in a blind test, without revealing their prices. Some preferred the harsher lines of the cheaper chair, while others thought the Danish chair was more beautiful. The magazine encouraged readers to look at the VDN label, since price and durability were not necessarily related. With such excellent results in favor of the cheaper Ikea furniture, and such prominent exposure—some 17 pages and the cover—in a key popular magazine, it is understandable that the coverage was a welcome promotion for Ikea.

“Fresh and Young” Furniture, Innovative Sales Models

A change was coming to the Swedish furniture trade, both in retail methods and production standards, and in the ideals that had for years assumed “timeless quality” was a better investment. The battle was between cheap “furniture from the great mail-order firm”—that is, Ikea—and expensive furniture for those “who are hard to please”—in other words, an interior furnished mostly with Malmsten furniture. The “hard to please” options had been purchased from an ordinary furniture shop, and represented the most expensive pieces in Allt i Hemmet’s comparison of five living rooms.

19 Ek, “Vi lät testa några möbler,” 47.
20 Ek, “Se upp med möbelpriserna!” 32-41. Swedish text in headings to the interiors: “med möbler från stora postorderfirman”, “om man väljer kräset... och ännu mera kräset”.

The magazine also noticed a change in consumer behavior. More people were turning away from buying furniture from ordinary shops, choosing instead to purchase from Ikea, which had mail-order customers all over Sweden and only a single store at the company’s headquarters in Älmhult. At the time, Ikea had a sales equivalent of more than one hundred average-sized furniture shops, with plans to open stores in Stockholm and Sundsvall.

Ikea’s retail format was one of several innovations in the furniture market, as the magazine noted. The self-service discount store Wessels, which offered low-cost furniture outside Malmö, was another retail phenomenon that was attracting customers traveling by car. And still another, cheaper way to buy furniture was offered in the Bodés chain, which had reduced the markup that customers usually paid with large, rational stores that specialized in furniture for the small apartment.

With the furniture market in flux, Allt i Hemmet compared traditional furniture stores to these three new furniture sales models in its five furnished living rooms. As a caveat before revealing its results, the magazine wrote: “Note, cheap furniture is only defensible if it is also good: has the right measurements, good strength, well-made carpentry work, is nice to look at and to live with.” Characterizing “good furniture” as based on tradition, in which quality and functionality could be measured and evaluated, the statement is typical of the time, although aesthetics were not unimportant. The result was

21 Ibid., 32-37, and Birgitta Ek, “Varför kostar möbler så olika,” Allt i Hemmet 9, no. 9 (1964): 43, 46. Bodés had seven stores in Stockholm and four in other places: Göteborg, Borås, Östersund, and Enköping. Ibid., 44.
22 Ek, “Se upp med möbelpriserna!,” 32. Swedish text: “OBS! Billiga möbler är bara försvarbarna om de samtidigt är bra: har riktiga mått, god hållfasthet, välgjort snickeriarbete, är trevliga att se på och leva ihop med.”
“sensational,” *Allt i Hemmet* exclaimed in bold in the introduction: “One can save thousands of kronor on the furniture for one room without losing in quality.”23 The difference in price ranged from an economical 2,777 kronor for the “fairly anonymous” Ikea room to 8,645 kronor for the most expensive room from an ordinary furniture shop, where Carl Malmsten had designed almost everything, along with some pieces by Danish furniture designers Kaare Klint and Hans J. Wegner, also rooted in a craft tradition.24

The most expensive room in the study captured an air of craft-based, timeless quality, with aesthetic references to the eighteenth century that were recognizable from the advisory literature. (Fig. 10.2) The gray Malmsten shelves and storage units belong to his eighteenth-century-inspired series *Ulfåsa*, and the sofa *Samsas* is similar to his *Fästfolket*, featured in the Co-op book *Sätta bo*. The storage unit with practical foldout writing surface is the same as the one featured in *Bosättning*. To strengthen the craft-based ideal, the carpet is handwoven and the Danish furniture recalls the Arts and Crafts movement’s admiration for vernacular tradition. The dining chairs by Klint with straw seats suggest Shaker ladder-back chairs and Morris’s Sussex chair. Wegner’s stick-back rocking chair with straw seat also corresponds to Shaker furniture, with its straight but rounded lines, just as a fine cabinetmaker might desire.25 Malmsten’s upholstered chair resembles an Empire-style wing chair. “One might as well aim for a sofa by Malmsten or a table by Wegner rather than furniture designed by more anonymous architects,” the

24 Ibid., 33, 35, 41. The final results were: Ikea 2,777, Bodés 3,681, Wessels 3,912, furniture shop I 7,283, and furniture shop II 8,645. Ibid., 33.
25 For more on Danish furniture’s references to American furniture forms, see Maggie Taft, “Making Danish Modern, 1945-1960” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2014).
magazine concluded, as the price did not differ much between high-quality, industrially produced furniture bought in furniture shops: “it comes to the same thing.”

Of the three living rooms furnished with cheaper furniture, Allt i Hemmet favored Ikea’s interior as “fresh and young,” while dismissing the others as boring and hard to personalize. What made the Ikea interior “fresh and young” were the light-colored lacquered bookshelves with storage underneath, similar in style to a Malmsten design, the light blue couch, and the white lacquered Thonet-style arm chairs around the table. In this way, the interior resembles the “friendly living room” that Ikea presented for “the friends of timelessness” in the 1962 catalog. (See fig. 8.3) Continuing the rocking chair tradition of the 1950s, there was a curved, black bentwood version with rattan seat and back, also from the old Thonet factory in Poland. The magazine thought that its “funny curlicue speaks quite nicely to the objective little easy chair of black oxhide,” one that was “almost indestructible” in the test. Even though the room was presented as “fairly anonymous without architect names with characteristic profile,” the magazine was positive and observed that there might be similarities. The fictional couple could have

26 Ek, “Se upp med möbelpriserna!,” 39. The comment was in comparison to the second most expensive interior, also “discriminatingly” selected from different furniture shops, which, at 7,282 kronor, cost almost as much. Swedish text: “Man kan lika väl sikta mot en soffa av Malmsten eller ett bord av Wegner som mot möbler ritade av mera anonyma arkitekter, det blir hugget som stucket.”

27 Ibid., 35-37. Swedish text: “fräsch och ung”. Ek described the Wessels sofa and easy chair as “fabulously cheap, but we have seen nicer and better, but more expensive in the store,” and Bodés’ “conventional” furniture, as in most furniture stores, with “teak and teak again.” In the latter interior, the magazine said its interior designer, Ingald Andersson, “has done magic, as it is not an easy task to put together a personalized interior from such an assortment.” Swedish text: “Soffan och fåtöljen är visserligen fabulöst billig. Men roligare har vi sett och bättre finns hos Wessels - fast dyrare. . . . rätt konventionellt, mycket stoppmöbler, teak och åter teak... Han har trollat, för det är inte någon lätt sak att plocka samman en personlig interiör ur ett sådant sortiment.”

28 Ibid., 35. Swedish text: “Gungstolens lustiga krumelur pratar rätt trevligt ihop med den sakliga lilla fåtöljen med svart oxhud. (Som vi förresten testat, den visade sig nästan oförstörbar.)”
chosen shelves of better quality, but preferred to “make it luxurious with a wall-to-wall carpet.”

Overall, Birgitta Ek was kind in describing the Ikea interior. Her benevolent view on both the most expensive and cheapest interiors followed a principle: either have high-quality, industrially produced furniture by well-known designers like Malmsten and Wegner, or go fully in the opposite direction with cheap and anonymous, “young” and unconventional. The magazine had little interest in a boring, conventional middle segment of the furniture market. By cheering the cheap and unconventional, *Allt i Hemmet* paved the way for a new furniture ideal and for the future success of Ikea. Concluding their comparison between ordinary furniture shops and new retail models, the magazine found the more rationalized sales methods interesting and noted that the exclusive furniture shop, with their top-quality cabinetmaking, was nonetheless a necessary complement.

**The Co-op Offers Complementary Furniture**

*Allt i Hemmet* also covered the Co-op in a separate article that promoted a do-it-yourself spirit. The magazine claimed that they had never before seen so many good semi-manufactured products: “Indeed, one goes there longing for hammer and nails. And a little cottage to decorate.” The magazine highlighted articles such as a stick-back chair

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30 Ek, “Varför kostar möbler så olika,” 46.
to paint yourself, whitewood pedestals to combine with a board of desired length, doors, table legs, and so on.

Two years before Ikea, in 1963, the Co-op had opened its first discount store called Obs! next to the new highway in Vårby south of Stockholm. The largest discount store in Europe at the time, the location was inspired by the American retail concept "one stop shopping." It covered 15,000 square meters and offered 900 parking spaces. The cheaper location outside the city provided self-service and a large range of products, which meant lower costs for customers travelling by car. Obs! sold everything from milk and furniture to small airplanes!\(^{32}\) Ikea would open a similar concept store, in nearby Kungens kurva, which emphasized furniture in 1965. The Co-op also had many Domus stores around Sweden where they sold furniture chosen from a broad market, including the Bra bohag assortment, which was available in the larger stores.

The Co-op’s own production was highly specialized: Sweden produced beds and kitchen tables, Denmark chairs, and Finland chairs and tables. The Co-op aimed at having a narrow assortment of utility furniture of good quality, and the magazine saw it more as “complementary furniture,” as it did not comprise a full range of home furnishings at the time.\(^{33}\) From 1964 on, however, the Co-op expanded within the field of home furnishing by creating a department called KF Interiör, which also published the magazine-like catalog *Nytt hem*.\(^{34}\)


\(^{34}\) KF Interiör combined the previous departments of textiles, furniture, lighting, and the Lammhult
Paving the Way for Ikea

After the 1964 *Allt i Hemmet* test, the newspapers declared “The furniture trade [is] under fire” and warned of a “Big wallop against the furniture trade.” Allt i Hemmet’s comprehensive feature about the price war on furniture, led by Ikea and Bodés, created a storm among dealers. Fredriksson reported in an editorial that there had been many bitter attacks on the magazine since the article. The Swedish Commissioner (Ombudsman) for Freedom of Commerce, however, had welcomed the opportunity to give a large readership a lesson about the obvious differences between the low-price and traditional businesses; in his experience, he noted, the furniture trade was one of the biggest problems. Fredriksson recalled the fury she had faced and how the head office of the furniture industry association wrote a letter stating that if the magazine continued with similar test reports, the industry would urge an advertising boycott. The owner of the magazine, Lukas Bonnier, wanted her to stand firm and took the threat lightly. She did, however, come across a confidential letter urging the magazine’s many advertisers to join a boycott.

The end of the trade’s attempts to smear *Allt i Hemmet* and Ikea came when the television news program *Aktuellt* interviewed Fredriksson about the situation. In his book about Ikea, Bertil Torekull describes how sympathies swung in Ikea’s favor and that testing became one of *Allt i Hemmet*’s most important features, increasing its sales and

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37 Ibid. Fredriksson referred to ombudsman Åke Sundqvist’s article in *Expressen* September 10, 1964.
Without having to lift a finger or invest huge sums,” Torekull concludes that, overnight, Ikea “was accepted in drawing rooms. It was no longer foolish to shop at Ikea. Consumers could be said to have both good financial sense and excellent taste.” When Torekull interviewed Fredriksson about Ikea and the magazine, she summarized their roles with a laugh: “Per Albin Hansson built the Swedish ‘people’s home,’ Ingvar furnished it... but we at Allt i Hemmet said where the furniture should stand.”

The furniture dealers, on the other hand, argued that it was indeed possible to furnish a living room as cheaply as Ikea allowed, and in 1965 Allt i Hemmet took them up on the challenge. The result did not bear out their claim: Ikea’s living room was still cheaper, since the magazine wanted more than a cheap room, it sought a pleasant and cozy space, with decent-looking furniture. In the article, the magazine questioned why there were so many boring and awkward pieces of furniture at the lower price range in shops. They could easily pick out an excellent assortment of china, glass, and linen in a discount department store to set up a home, but not furniture for a one-bedroom apartment—at least, not if you wanted the same quality, including beauty, as could be found with the rest of the household goods.

Further criticizing high markups in furniture stores, the magazine also encouraged readers to compare prices between shops, as they, for example, had found Malmsten’s stick-back chair Lilla Åland differing in price from 54 to 70 kronor for exactly the same

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39 “Vi kan också sa möbelhandlarna,” Allt i Hemmet 10, no. 5 (1965): 36-37, 62. For the new comparison, the magazine had included furniture from the shops Stalands, 3,267 kr, and HC-möbler, 3,702 kr, while the Ikea room cost 2,882 kr.
40 Ibid., 62.
chair. In these articles, *Allt i Hemmet* contributed to the two most prevalent themes of consumer guidance: promoting cheaper furniture of decent quality that was also well designed, and encouraging the consumer to be aware of differences in price.

Cheering the cheap and unconventional, *Allt i Hemmet* paved the way for a new furniture ideal and the future success of Ikea, the largest furniture manufacturer of postwar Sweden. The efforts to promote young and cheap home furnishings was a mission that *Allt i Hemmet* would continue in the second half of the 1960s.

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Part Three, 1965–1970:

Changing Ideals: Particleboard, Pine, and Package Kitchens

Chapter Eleven

Youthful, Groovy Homes

In the early 1960s, the keywords were timelessness, quality, and durability, as emphasized by contemporary setting-up-home articles and handbooks. By the second half of the decade, the prevalence of words like young, unconventional, and cheap in the same publications signified a new way for conceiving how to set up a home. As the first vocal proponent in this new direction, Allt i Hemmet promoted a couple’s first home as “personal, groovy, and cheap. Neither hard to keep tidy nor status accentuated.”¹ The magazine’s representation of the ideal interior for young people set a tone that others followed: Ikea, Bra bohag, and eventually the Co-op. In this respect, the 33-page setting-up-home feature in a 1965 issue of Allt i Hemmet, under the heading “live youthfully... live economically,” marks a dividing line in the story of the ideal home, a change that began the year before with the magazine’s Ikea feature.

When values of youthfulness and cheapness replaced the ideal of timeless quality, it was also a break with the traditional dichotomy of rational and irrational consumption. As economic historian Orsi Husz points out, it was not the economic Spara, the saver, who

stood against the mass-consuming Slösa, the waster, for they both were equally materialistic. Rather, it was the politically aware citizen driven, by ideals such as solidarity with unprivileged groups, anticapitalism, and environmentalism who stood against the waster. In the late 1960s, such unselfish ideals were new additions to the previous ideal of cautious consumption, according to Husz, who reminds that, in Sweden, consumption had been viewed with suspicion throughout the twentieth century.\(^2\) While *Allt i Hemmet* did not specifically discuss anticommercial or political values among young people, Marianne Fredriksson understood that they were not interested in spending a lot of money on home furnishings. This chapter will discuss the new focus on a youthful and unconventional way of setting up home, which *Allt i Hemmet* introduced and mediated in the latter half of the 1960s. The magazine, I will argue, was a driving force in shifting the ideals of consumption regarding home furnishings in Sweden in the late 1960s.

**“Young, Modern, Groovy” Furniture**

Instead of durable home furnishings for life, “the young furniture might not last a lifetime (as a previous generation required) but it will work well and for a long time,” Bra bohag proclaimed in 1967. They followed *Allt i Hemmet*’s lead and introduced their “cheap furniture with quality” as “young, modern, groovy.”\(^3\) Ikea also embraced the

\(^2\) Husz, “Spara, Slösa och alla de andra,” 325.
youth-oriented trend, promoting pine furniture as “cheap, good, and young” in 1967. The following year, Ikea introduced the series Pop 68 in lacquered particleboard to provide “an utterly groovy interior with blazing colors for ‘the beat generation’ and everyone who dares to think young, new, and cheeky.” In 1970, the Co-op specifically launched a “Young line” in their catalog with furniture of particleboard that you mount yourself; they “may not last a lifetime. But they will help your finances last a long time.”

Youthfulness became a prestige word,” according to media historian Johan Fornäs, who also argues that young people took a greater part in society as they grew in number, educated themselves longer, and had more money to spend in a time of growing prosperity. Ellen Key had envisioned the twentieth century as the century of the child. In hindsight, it may equally be called the century of youth culture, according to Fornäs.

Born in the 1940s, the large young generation who set up home in the late 1960s was well educated, political, and influential.

The rules for the setting-up-home loan were also changing along with society. After July 1, 1969, couples did not have to be married and could be students or single mothers


5 KF Interiör, *Nytt hem Vår/sommar 1970*, no. 5 (Stockholm: KF Interiör, 1970), 3. Swedish text: “Ung linje”, “Dom står sig kanske inte en livstid. Men dom hjälper din kassa att stå sig ett bra tag.” The series *Spika* and *Laban* had been introduced before, but in this catalog they were presented under a special heading as a “Young line.”

and fathers to get the loan, which at the time was a maximum of 6,000 kronor. Another sign of the changing attitude was the demise of setting-up home publications, apart from new editions of the Co-op’s Sätta bo. Instead, these were replaced with an increasing number of books on Do-it-Yourself projects and commercial sources. Once again, Allt i Hemmet was a driving force in promoting the new ideal home.

**Live Youthfully and Economically with Allt i Hemmet**

To mark the change in values and representations of the ideal home, Allt i Hemmet revealed a new slogan in 1965: “live youthfully... live economically.” It was the magazine’s first setting-up-home feature since the special supplement in 1962, which had questioned the “show-off traps” of expensive bookshelves and posh seating groups in favor of necessary appliances. To enhance their mid-decade message, editors Marianne Fredriksson and Marie Oljelund arranged two living room interiors as a comparison on the first spread of their 33-page setting-up-home feature. (Figs. 11.1-2) Presented as “youthful, flexible, fresh for 2,300,” the colorful interior has bright green-painted shelves, a simple seating group on light white-lacquered legs and checkered cotton fabric in orange and green, and an inexpensive seagrass rug. To add a human touch, intellectual pursuits such as an ongoing chess game and an open book in the sofa are visible. In contrast, the magazine presents the expensive interior’s seating group and wall-covering

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shelves of subdued beige and dark brown colors in more pejorative terms: “neat, locked-down, conventional for 7,500.” The only visible activity centers on a tea set.

The preferred choice of Allt i Hemmet was clear. The colorful living room promoted do-it-yourself projects and cheap furniture, and cost less than a third of the other interior. Defending widespread wall-covering bookshelves, the magazine pointed out that they were “cheap warehouse shelves that had been painted in a groovy green,” which later could be used in a nursery, hobby room, or basement. One could easily change the cotton fabric of the seating group when one got tired of it. For flexibility, the table and chair could serve on the balcony as well, according to the magazine. A do-it-yourself approach with cheap, multipurpose furniture exemplified Allt i Hemmet’s “young, flexible line.”

The expensive interior shared comparable similarities with the parlor of the 1930s. Thirty years later, Allt i Hemmet still argued against using status symbols in the living room. Having defended the parlor in the 1950s, mainly for its symbolic function and as a retreat for the adults, Fredriksson found that furniture catalogs and shop windows still represented a conventional ideal for spending a lot of money on home furnishings. In the

8 Fredriksson and Oljelund, “bo ungt... bo billigt,” 6-7. Swedish text: “Ungt, rörligt, friskt för 2.300”, “Snyggt – låst, konventionellt för 7.500.” This feature was the first to specifically target young couples setting up home since the supplement and article in 1962, but the magazine had had features that could be used by this target group, such as a few on bedrooms and beds, as well as the key feature on the furniture trade with comparisons of companies and prices; Birgitta Ek, “Se upp med möbelpriserna” in 1964, in which Ikea’s chairs and living room was considered in depth, see chapter ten. “Bo ungt... bo billigt” targeted young couples and included, in addition to comparing a cheap and expensive living room, four suggestions for how to furnish a living room, bedroom, and kitchen. Additionally, there were straightforward consumer-guidance articles comparing beds and kitchen tables, Birgitta Ek, “En bra säng för halva priset,” and Marie Oljelund, “Varför sitta och trängas?” as well as descriptions on how to build “young and cheap” furniture, Marie Oljelund and Ingald Andersson, “Så här gör man ‘unga och billiga’ möbler,” Allt i Hemmet 10, no. 9 (1965): 6-35, 83-85.
1960s, the only difference was that a new type of suite—the contemporary seating group next to a wall of shelving and storage furniture—had replaced the historicist dining sets disposed of in the 1930s and 1940s: “This is how rooms look in the setting-up-home catalogs and shop windows, and which thereby become an ideal for many. The ingredients are almost always the same, upholstered seating group, expensive carpet, a wall of bookshelves, fragile textiles, and high-grade wood. Everything is made of status symbols—expensive, as the setting-up-home loan of 4,000 only covers half the living room.”

Allt i Hemmet’s expensive interior resembled the interiors in current furniture catalogs: matching upholstered sofa and armchair around light gray, long-pile carpet on wall-to-wall carpeting, a Danish Modern-type armchair with teak armrests and legs, and a coffee table in oak with a rustic ceramic tea set. Along the wall, the shelving and storage system holds a TV set, some ceramic pieces, and books. Next to the sofa, there are some green plants. The only striking features are an orange pillow and an orange vase.

Describing this interior as a status symbol that was too expensive for a young couple setting up home, Allt i Hemmet’s argument echoed the advice of the 1930s. At that time, the SSF and others had railed against Chippendale and other revival-style suites that locked up the household finances and turned the living room into a zone forbidden to children. To spend the whole setting-up-home loan on just half a living room, as in the comparative example, resembled the results of the 1938 state investigation of 164

families. Consequently, Fredriksson argued that, in spite of its high quality and durability, the dream interior could eventually go wrong, since lives and needs change, and their choice is “just another version, however pretty, of yesterday’s status furniture—the Bordeaux red and bottle-green plush, the bracket lamps trying to look like candles—that we now sniff at with contempt.”

Fredriksson’s description of the expensive interior also repeated the prewar strategy of furniture shops persuading young couples to buy a furniture suite in installments, creating a parlor more for show than for living: “What does the young couple get then, that allows themselves to be influenced to buy such a home? Well, they lock themselves up for years to come with a heavy, inflexible frame with few possibilities to renew and change things according to how life changes.”

Comparing the cheap and expensive living rooms, Fredriksson did not speak of good or bad taste, but phrases such as “young and flexible” or “locked-down and conventional” expressed the magazine’s view. By promoting furnishings that may not last a lifetime, such as the cheap warehouse shelves and light seating furniture, Allt i Hemmet took another and more flexible approach than the ideal of durable quality and timeless design current in the early 1960s. This marked a change from what was considered “correct” consumption.

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12 Ibid., 6. Swedish text: “Vad får nu det unga par som låter sig påverkas att skaffa ett sådant här hem. Jo, de läser sig för åratal framåt för en tung, orörlig ram med små möjligheter att förnya sig, ändra allt eftersom man själv och ens tillvaro förändras.” Marianne Fredriksson continued to battle against status furniture leading to a living room for adults only, for example in her editorial to the 1966 setting-up-home special. Marianne Fredriksson, “Möbler för oss,” Allt i Hemmet 11, no. 9 (1966): 3. The magazine’s new interior designer Stephan Gip continued questioning the pressure from furniture stores to purchase a seating group, a storage and shelving system, etc. Stephan Gip, “Kasta loss från påtryckarna när ni inreder hemma!,” Allt i Hemmet 15, no. 10 (1970): 122.
“Neo-simple” Living and the Young Generation

Rather than preaching, Fredriksson created a checklist for the young generation in her 1965 feature “live youthfully... live economically,” so that readers could identify themselves:

- The personal, “neo-simple” way of living will become the obvious choice for more and more young people.
- Not only [is this the right approach] because it is cheap and one does not want to be accused of buying status symbols in the form of upholstered furniture. Mostly because it is more fun, groovier, and easier to live where the things are there for us and not we for them.
- More people realize that one has greater use of a cheap dishwasher than an expensive carpet. And more and more count on setting up a home a second time, when the children have passed the worst wear-and-tear age.\textsuperscript{13}

Demonstrating her ability to interpret her time, Fredriksson thereby shared an understanding for the young generation who would revolt against what they felt were old-fashioned bourgeois values and habits. She further acknowledged how increased prosperity and mass production meant that more people could afford to buy goods, including setting up home a second time. What she describes, however, is not consuming

to emulate another social group in society just because one can afford it. Rather, Fredriksson points in another direction, toward a set of values whereby the young generation would choose the “neo-simple” way of living without status symbols as a way to distinguish themselves from the dominant society through their consumption choices. In other words, she is highlighting the difference between Thorstein Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption and Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of distinction. Both explained consumption choices through social differentiation rather than those based on desires or advertising. Veblen saw how society’s elite demonstrated its power and status through consumption of luxury goods, which created a desire among lower classes to imitate their conspicuous consumption. Instead of emulating the upper classes, Bourdieu saw how socioeconomic groups might distinguish themselves from each other through their economic and symbolic—including cultural, political, and social—capital. For Bourdieu, consumption entails meaning in which taste and cultural capital are factors of distinction. Fredriksson’s assessment of the young generation as distinguishing itself from the older generation through “neo-simple” home furnishings is an example of his theory.

*Allt i Hemmet*’s 1965 setting-up-home feature marked a dividing line in the story of the ideal home, a change that Bra bohag also shared in their 1967–68 catalog featuring cheaper, unconventional furniture:

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Gone to a degree is also the respect for money and possessions. One is used to living surrounded by expensive things and using them daily: cars, refrigerators, tape recorders, etc. The children learn from an early age that things are to be used. One does not set up home once and for all. One lives simply in the beginning, then changes, moves, exchanges, buys something new every now and then. Durable materials and constructions play a larger role for people today. Practical viewpoints are allowed to take precedence over conventional, status-bound opinions.15

The unconventional, “neo-simple,” and child-friendly ideal that *Allt i Hemmet* formulated at this time set the tone for Ikea, Bra bohag, and the Co-op in the second half of the 1960s. In their 1965 setting-up-home feature, *Allt i Hemmet* presented how four fictional couples in their twenties had set up their first home. Targeting readers all over Sweden, the couples lived in a small town, a big city, and a suburb with different access to home furnishing stores. The small-town couple bought mostly through mail order, that is, Ikea, and from cheap department stores. An important theme for *Allt i Hemmet*, the four interiors covered eighteen pages at the beginning of the issue in addition to the comparison of the cheap and expensive living room.16 There was always a pedagogical rationale in such features. The new concepts showed one-bedroom apartments featuring particleboard and other do-it-yourself projects while another home focused on reuse, two themes that will be discussed below. The latter couple had to ask friends and relatives for finds in the attic, while the other three couples furnished for roughly the amount of the


16 The full feature was 33 pages long.
setting-up-home loan, 4,000 kronor. To set up home with cheap furniture was the third theme.

Setting Up Home with Particleboard and other DIY Projects

*Allt i Hemmet* contributed to popularizing particleboard as a new material for furniture. By mixing wood chips with glue, a strong, versatile material could be produced that was not limited to the material characteristics of natural wood. Already in 1959, Lena Larsson had looked for designers who could master particleboard as a material, since she thought it was too good to be used only for building. Sweden’s first particleboard factory had opened in 1956. By 1967, every Swede used an average of 17 kilos of particleboard. In 1961, Ikea started describing different materials such as foam rubber and plastic foam at the beginning of the catalog, and included particleboard as a material to be increasingly used in furniture. It took some years, however, before the company promoted furniture series exclusively made of particleboard. In *Allt i Hemmet*’s 1965 setting-up-home feature, the focus was on particleboard that people could buy at the lumberyard and build for themselves.


Promoting do-it-yourself projects, *Allt i Hemmet* provided descriptions and drawings on how to make “young and cheap” particleboard furniture and other projects in 1965.\(^\text{19}\) Their previous setting-up-home special in 1962 included only one do-it-yourself couch. Anders and Anna, the fictional couple in the 1965 feature, chose do-it-yourself furnishings—couches, beds, and coffee tables—because they were cheaper and more fun to hammer and screw together, using wooden strips for the edges, ready-made legs, and foam for the cushions. (Fig. 11.3) Emphasizing unconventional and nonstatus home furnishing as an ideal, Fredriksson noted with satisfaction that the couple had not sized up their neighbor’s possessions.

She recalls Ellen Key, who in *Beauty for All* admired a young couple that let go of conventions to create a harmonious home with simple means, making their furniture from packing crates.\(^\text{20}\) Fredriksson’s couple ordered the particleboard and strips at a lumberyard, and the foam was of a standard size for the mattresses and specially ordered for the backrests. As a comparison, while the couch in the expensive interior cost 1,646 kronor, this couple got two couches placed at an angle in the corner for less than half that amount. The furniture was not the only do-it-yourself project in the household. According to the story, Anders had made the artwork, a Calder-inspired yellow mobile against a blue-painted particleboard.\(^\text{21}\) In the bedroom, the combined dressing and working table


\(^{21}\) Fredriksson and Oljelund, “bo ungt... bo billigt, 9-11. The only things they needed to add were some rattan stools, a Spanish string carpet, a Japanese ceiling lamp made of paper, a reading lamp by Arne Jacobsen, and a bench by Alvar Aalto that served as side table. They had found a leather armchair in an attic, which they refurbished with galon (vinyl-coated fabric) instead of leather, thus cutting the cost. Their
was of particleboard, along with the tested Thonet-type chair from Ikea and a rattan stool. (Fig. 11.4) The wall-to-wall carpeting found a cheaper, less status-filled alternative in coconut fiber. Adding to the casual furnishing of this home, the couple had bought the table and four chairs at a store specializing in supplying offices and cafeterias.

Building your own furniture was the new way of furnishing, according to Larsson, and the idea even entered the school curriculum. In 1967, she promoted a new furniture series designed with a home economics education in mind, which with its focus on setting up home continued the tradition of study circles and home exhibitions of the 1930s and 1940s. A former evangelist for that movement, Larsson welcomed the sets of laminated plywood that pupils could assemble themselves with the help of pegs and rubber bands. The pieces could become a bed, sofa bed, two types of armchairs, and four types of tables. (Fig. 11.5) If someone questioned its temporary character, she responded: “But how COMFORTABLE to start with, to try, to assemble, to not be so terribly careful. To get used to thinking about furnishing, the space of furniture. That is worth a lot!”

The advent of buildable furniture sets was part of a new way of instructing consumers on how to furnish a home. It was used in schools and also sold by the Co-op as **Byggjoker**, presented as a “happy and unconventional seating group” making the living

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room “light and friendly . . . young and fresh, with an eye to the interior of the 70s.”

Larsson highlighted the flexibility of the simple construction, so that you could set up a table when it was needed instead of having it all the time. In the same issue, Allt i Hemmet further promoted do-it-yourself construction for teenagers in a feature on how to build a “pop room” for 250 kronor with particleboard, concrete blocks, and wooden beer crates.

Instilling the ideal of non-status-burdened and inexpensive interiors for a young generation, Allt i Hemmet published many articles on do-it-yourself projects. In 1967, under the heading “Young, good, bold, and cheap!”, the magazine rejected conventional dining sets and sideboards of oak or teak as well as Eero Saarinen’s “exclusive and very expensive” white fiberglass Tulip chairs and table—a dream for many young people.”

Instead, Allt i Hemmet encouraged young families to buy simple furniture of whitewood

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23 Wickman, “Byggbart, utbytbart, flyttbart,” 364-65. The initiative to create buildable furniture came from Susanne Hallgren and Marta Nilsson, home economics teachers in Malmö, Annika Heijkenskjöld, director of Form/Design Center in Malmö, and designers Börge Lindau and Bo Lindekrantz. Östbo furniture factory produced the parts of birch plywood. The pupils were supposed to build different types of environments and learn about utility and surface needs. There was no thought of “style” or “taste” in the design, which basically was rather geometric with some rounded corners. The idea behind this educational tool went along the same lines as the updated curriculum of 1967. There was also an accompanying book, Möbler (Furniture). Ibid. The Co-op sold the buildable furniture under the name Byggjoker, both for children and adults. KF Interiör, Byggjoker (Stockholm: KF Interiör, 1967). It was presented again in the 1968–1969 catalog, both for a bedroom and living room lacquered in white and as children’s furniture in red and green. It was made of laminated pine veneered with birch, not particleboard. KF Interiör, Nytt hem 1968-69, no. 3 (Stockholm: KF Interiör, 1968), 12, 24, 47. Swedish text: “Den här glada och okonventionella sittgruppen ’Byggjoker’ . . . Ljus och vänlig är Byggjoker-miljön – ung och fräsch, med sikte på 70-talets interiör.”


to paint themselves and showed how to personalize with color and fabric, including how to change the fabric of old chairs. Such furniture, the magazine stressed, was also child friendly.\(^{27}\)

A driving force behind the do-it-yourself trend in Sweden, the magazine devoted most of a whole issue in 1970 to projects that a family could do together.\(^{28}\) The headline on the cover was “Do it yourself!” and illustrated a family in the midst of their projects in a room, with father putting up a red and green wallpaper with cherries, mother sewing matching red cushion covers, and the young son painting the door in a green shade. The issue also showed how to make furniture out of particleboard or plywood. At this time, it was assumed that men would be as involved as women in do-it-yourself projects at home. The idea behind the issue, according to the editorial, was to try such projects yourself without being afraid of not being “handy.”\(^{29}\) The carefree attitude was liberating.

\(^{27}\) Maud Höste, “Ungt, bra, djärvt och billigt!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 12, no. 1 (1967): 34-45, 76-78. Swedish text: “Exklusiv och mycket dyr är den vita Saarinengruppen, en önskedöm för många unga.” The Saarinen group cost 4,000 kronor and the conventional dining set of oak or teak 2,500–3,000 kronor, which was too much for young couples setting up home, according to *Allt i Hemmet*. In the same issue, on a page with short notices, the magazine called upon furniture producers to make plastic furniture that is both interesting design and reasonably priced, stating that they thought plastic would be a practical material for young and fun furniture, “Vi vill se,” 83.

\(^{28}\) Kristina Lindal, “Välj den bit som passar er och gör det själv!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 11 (1970): 23-49 (do-it-yourself projects that a family could do room by room, such as papering with glass-fiber weave and wallpaper, making a wall of particleboard shelves in the entrance hall, how to assemble particleboard, etc.); in the same issue: Kristina Lindal, “En handbok om hur man lagar grejor och med listighet gör en massa jobb lättare Allt i hemmet 1970,” 51-66 (a handbook with all kinds of practical advice, such as how to hang paintings on a concrete wall, repair a linoleum floor, keep a paintbrush soft, etc.), Erik Boman, “Möbler att göra själv av plywood och lamell, 67-71, 126-29 (how to make furniture out of plywood and other laminated wood), Ingrid Olausson, “Det nya allrummet?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15., no. 13 (1970): 64-65, 86 (how to build a modern combined bed and cabinet as well as a baby swing inspired by a farm interior at Skansen).

\(^{29}\) Lennart Arnstad, “Man klarar mer än man tror,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 11 (1970): 3. In the following issue, a feature presented do-it-yourself ideas from readers, including furniture made of plywood or board, as a result of a competition announced in no. 8, 28-29, Harriet Clayhills, “Läsarnas gör-det-själv-idéer,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 12 (1970): 28-31, 84. There were also books published in Swedish on do-it-yourself
particularly because many Swedes had received a basic craft education in school, sloyd, which was often aimed at perfection. It was, as Wickman points out, the American idea of do-it-yourself that reached Sweden in the 1950s, with plenty of hobby material and new quick-drying latex paints, which had grown into a nationwide movement in the 1960s, which *Allt i Hemmet* encouraged.

The Co-op’s *Spika* (“to nail”) shelf symbolized the informality and do-it-yourself approach that flourished in the second half of the 1960s. Its plain, untreated particleboard with predrilled holes made it so easy to nail together that even a child could do it; no painting was necessary. Following an idea by architect Erik Karlström, his intern, architect Magnus Silfverhielm, made the first prototype. The idea was to use a whole standard-sized piece particleboard without leaving any waste. The key to the pieces’ practical construction was a new type of nail that allowed for joining wood fiber boards without breaking them. In 1967, Hedvig Hedqvist, the head of the Co-op’s textile department, visited the firm for a different project, but she found the shelf more interesting and incorporated it in the assortment. Launched in spring 1968, *Spika* had already sold 16,000 copies by November, and the Co-op also introduced tables, benches, a bed, and storage furniture according to the same simple principle. *Spika* eventually

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31 Documentation done in 2017 when the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm acquired *Spika* from Magnus Silfverhielm, who had used it for almost 50 years. Archival material of accession number NMK 16/2017.
32 Harriet Clayhills, “Möbler,” notice in the monthly column “Den här månaden,” *Allt i Hemmet* 13, no. 11 (1968): 107. *Spika* was displayed at the avant-garde Form Design Center in Malmö. At the opening, the guests were invited to use hammers and screwdrivers to assemble the pieces. Ibid.
sold 1.3 million units in the Co-op’s Domus stores all over Sweden. Described as “epoch-making,” “the big, plain surfaces [of Spika] invite even the somewhat advanced do-it-yourselfer to play with patterns and colors.” (Fig. 11.6)

In this way, Spika differed from the equally mountable particleboard-furniture available from Ikea, which was lacquered or veneered. In their 1970 catalog, however, Ikea introduced Pokus, which resembled Spika but with greater variety, offering for example modules to make round tables. (Fig. 11.7) This served as a model for “neo-simple” construction, which had become a buzzword at the time. In an interior with plain Spika shelves, white tubular steel chairs with bright red fabric and similarly bright red bowls, books, and other items in the shelves, the Co-op catalog affirmed that “today each and every person can dare to furnish in a more personal way—which the low price facilitates.” Furniture made of particleboard came to symbolize a Swedish version of the international vogue for antidesign, as Hedqvist observed.

Spika became a symbol of the new youthful, unconventional way of furnishing, and Allt i Hemmet honored it as “the furniture of the year” in 1969. This new initiative was intended to help readers find “reasonable furniture, both in terms of price and function in

35 Ikea, Katalog 1970, 166. As Spika, Pokus comprised modules of predrilled, untreated particleboard to mount and paint yourself. Designers were Charlotte Rude and Hjördis Olsson-Une, who did the “lying pile” Modell 6+2 among others.
the great variety of news.” The mission of the magazine was now to highlight furniture that was “meaningful in the long run,” while opposing the furniture producers’ “strong concentration on fashion furniture—extreme instead of functional, status symbols rather than well-studied,” in addition, many were expensive as well. The selection of the *Spika* particleboard shelf and the tubular-steel armchair *Karin* illustrated the magazine’s ambition to promote cheap and simple materials. This practical furniture was sold as a modernist statement of flexibility and functionality, such as the easy placement of the shelf in any space, the possibility of painting it in any desired color, and the ease of movement afforded by this chair’s simple, timeless, and comfortable design.

**Repurposing Secondhand Furniture**

*Allt i Hemmet* promoted reusing furniture in its 1965 setting-up-home feature, an ideal that further met the longing for a rural past. Dag and Daga, one of the four couples

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39 “Årets möbler,” *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 9 (1969): 20. Swedish text: “meningsfulla på lång sikt,” “Vad som är på ont är den starka satsningen på modemöbler – extrema i stället för funktionella, statusladdade i stället för välstuderade.” To select the furniture of the year, the magazine had asked all Swedish furniture producers to send a picture and description of the piece of furniture that they thought deserved the award. *Allt i Hemmet* received a stack of entries and decided to share the first prize between the Co-op’s *Spika* and the tubular-steel armchair *Karin* designed by Bruno Mathsson for Dux/Bra Bohag. In addition, the magazine awarded five honorable mentions. Ibid., 19-20.

40 Ibid. Confirming the significance of *Spika* and *Karin*, both are represented at the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm. There are two versions of *Karin* acquired with different fabric, NMK 5/1971 and NMK 65/1972, and *Spika* has no. NMK 16/2017.

41 In 1959, the magazine had featured articles on how to paint and refresh used furniture as an early example of do-it-yourself furnishings, and in 1963 it published a guide to mixing reused furniture with cheap, semimanufactured whitewood to furniture that could be painted according to one’s taste. This was a new way to promote used furniture in the home, as would later be seen in the 1965 special on setting up home. Liv Nordqvist, “I stället för att köpa nytt: Fynd på vinden,” *Allt i Hemmet* 4, no. 1 (1959): 42-47; Liv Nordqvist, “I stället för att köpa nytt: Billigt att dela ett möblemang,” *Allt i Hemmet* 4, no. 2 (1959): 38-41; “I stället för att köpa nytt (3) 30 kr – lekmöbeln blev som ny!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 4, no. 3 (1959): 66-67.
in the feature, furnished their space almost completely with furniture found in the attics and basements of friends and family. Adding a touch of paint and some new fabrics, they needed to purchase only beds and a dining table to make their furnishings complete. (Fig. 11.8) Their approach evoked a sense of rural charm and played with a sense of the lost past, with living room that included blue-and-white striped rag rugs on the floor, a long nineteenth-century wooden couch with carved details, and white-lacquered wooden armchairs. A large bouquet of daisies and cornflowers on the round table further added to the rural, old-fashioned look, which the caption described as “fresh, newly painted, and romantically old-fashioned.”

Opposite the seating group, a television stood next to a colorful traditionally painted cabinet. The couple painted a large chest of drawers they had found at a rural auction, applying two shades of green so that the piece would complement the bedroom decor.

These touches reflected Allt i Hemmet’s promotion of youthful, cheap home furnishings in the second half of the 1960s, a position that embraced both contemporary particleboard and secondhand furniture from the past. The magazine showcased furniture that could be found in thrift stores run by charity organizations or sales from military and paints, designed to be easy to use, had just become available on the market and were advertised in the magazine. Gingen Jon Son, “Billigare kan det inte bli,” Allt i Hemmet 8, no. 1 (1963): 36-47. The article concluded that they saved almost 5,000 kronor by painting reused and semimanufactured furniture, adding also how fun and stimulating it is to do it yourself. The first edition of Sätta bo included a section on buying cheap whitewood furniture or reusing furniture from the 1920s and 1930s, painting it yourself or buying it from auction. After 1965, though, this was no longer discussed, probably because of the growth of mail-order selections. Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo (1962), 20. The Bra bohag book did not encourage going to auctions, but an inherited piece of furniture could be fine if it was functional and gave the home a personal touch. Promoting a do-it-yourself spirit, painting some found stick-back chairs might save money for those seeking a comfortable armchair. Arrhenius, “Bo bättre, trivas mera,” 11.

other state agencies. Old and new could be mixed in a young home, such as a white plastic table from the Co-op, similar to Saarinen’s Tulip, along with old walnut chairs with new fabric. A 1920s sideboard came alive with bold colors painted in orange and yellow circles.\(^43\) (Fig. 11.9)

Such interwar furniture had no value on the antique market, and the expectation here was not to hold it in reverence, according to the magazine. Instead, readers were encouraged to remove added ornamentation, such as the mullions on vitrines or curvy legs, and paint what was left in bold pop art colors.\(^44\) Without mentioning the Larsson home, the magazine followed Karin and Carl Larsson’s idea of painting old furniture boldly, as it had suggested in other articles. In contrast, the official setting-up-home brochure Bosättning was much more careful, warning against violating the style of older furniture and suggested contacting the experts at the Nordic Museum regarding valuable furniture.\(^45\) The modernist thinking encouraged by Allt i Hemmet’s staff is evident in their advice to remove all ornaments from reused furniture.

Polished sideboards and chests of drawers so common in the interwar period were the most typical storage furniture available in thrift shops; the magazine deemed them


\(^{44}\) Horowitz et al, “Allt detta från militära fyndmarknaden,” 26, 31. Already in 1959, cutting the legs and top pieces off a 1920s sideboard and painting it to make a modern cupboard was one of the suggestions offered a reader who wanted to know what to do with oak furniture from the 1920s. Rosa Horowitz and Gingen Östlund, “Var ska skåpet stå? Vi gör om 20-talets ekmöbler,” Allt i Hemmet 4, no. 10 (1959): 64-65, 107.

\(^{45}\) Krantz-Jensen, Bosättning (1965), 37. In the 1955 setting-up-home brochure, there was a small section on how mixing old and new could help personalize the home and make it friendly while saving money. Wærn Bugge and Ralf, eds., Bosättning (1955), 4.
“melancholic.” As a further argument against furniture as status symbol, the magazine concluded: “Much hard work and ambition had once been invested in their purchase, and now they are just a reminder that all status is evanescent.”

The promotion of used furniture updated through do-it-yourself projects continued the magazine’s battle against furniture as status symbol and appealed to the young generation. Those from bourgeois backgrounds were now rebelling against such values, and buying simple furniture from, for example, military surplus became a way to distinguish themselves from their parents’ generation. Getting back to the roots by moving to the countryside for alternative, self-sufficient living was part of the green wave, inspired by the American hippie movement. This included anti-commercial signifiers such as secondhand furniture, anti-fashion clothes from the young designers Mah-Jong, and leather boots with roots in indigenous Sami culture. This idealistic movement was sometimes called lingonrevolutionen, the lingonberry revolution, ironically signaling leftist ideals with the red-hued berries that are common in the Swedish countryside. Leftist groups were not alone in this activity; the center party, with its roots in rural tradition, also grew at this time, with its left-oriented young supporters describing themselves as watermelons: green on the outside and red on the inside.


47 Conversations with design and cultural historian Åke Livstedt reveal his own position on setting up home in the mid-1960s; he recognized the significance of Allt i Hemmet’s promotion of reused furniture from the military, identifying himself and his friends who moved to Småland wearing Mah-Jong and clogs as “lingonberry revolutionaries”, January 19, 2018, and other occasions. Bengt Eriksson, “Åt ekologiska morötter och gör revolution,” Ystads Allehanda, published June 19, 2013, https://www.ystadsallehanda.se/kultur-och-noje/at-ekologiska-morotter-och-gor-revolution/?stopredirect,
“neo-simple,” unconventional furnishing ideal that *Allt i Hemmet* spread suited the young generation’s setting up home and helped set the standards for their time. 

Cheap Furniture

*Allt i Hemmet*’s groundbreaking 1964 feature on Ikea had shaken up the furniture market by showing that cheap furniture could still be of high quality. The latter half of the 1960s was a time of great change in the furniture market, in which Ikea and the Co-op competed on an ever-larger scale. In 1966, *Allt i Hemmet* noted that more companies had begun importing from countries where labor was less expensive and described how domestic industries had begun adjusting to consumers’ demands for good and cheap furniture. This ideal echoed architect Le Corbusier and decades of modernist views on “furniture as a humble servant.” Birgitta Ek and Marianne Fredriksson observed that there was more furniture available that “is a good and unpretentious servant rather than a flashy symbol of the kind that stops us and our children from living freely and actively.”


since the last one in 1964. To avoid being accused of partiality, the magazine let the
companies furnish the interiors themselves, selecting pieces in collaboration with the
central association of furniture dealers, Sveriges Möbelhandlarens Centralförbund.
According to their list, the leading companies selling furniture around Sweden were Bra
bohag, Bodés, HC-möbler, KF (the Co-op), and Ikea. A jury of professionals in the field
and at the magazine evaluated their suggested living rooms. Continuing their motto from
the large 1965 feature, the theme in 1966 was “CHEAP, GOOD, YOUNG.”

The jury’s response illustrated the changing ideal from long-lasting quality of the
eyear 1960s to young, cheap, and child friendly. Under the heading “Young?” the jury
described Ikea’s pine-dominated interior as “light and airy, where one has come a long
way from status furniture and prestige thinking.” (Fig. 11.10) Acknowledging that
Ikea’s offerings held up well with the competition, the jury described the firm as “the
low-price company working freshly and youthfully, constantly renewing themselves.”
The magazine further noted how easily a round table could expand for friends, how
lightweight furniture gave room for dancing, and how the young couple setting up home

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49 Ibid., 21. They had also invited Önskehem, a new association of private furniture dealers, but this group
decided against due to their recent establishment. This type of retail was represented by Bra bohag
and HC-möbler. Bodés and Ikea were also part of the comparison in 1964, while the Co-op received a
separate feature; see chapter ten. The jury consisted of interior designer Sten Engdal, Swedish Society of
Crafts and Design; interior designer Lars Ljunglöf, Konstfack, University of Arts, Crafts, and Design; and
Allt i Hemmet interior designers Lena Larsson and Ingald Andersson and editors Birgitta Ek and Marianne
Fredriksson. This was a serious undertaking that covered twelve pages, plus an extra article on some of the
furniture and a review of furniture stores around Sweden. Swedish text: “BILLIGT, BRA, UNGT”.
från statusmöbler och prestigeänkande.”
51 Ibid. Swedish text: “Ikea hävdar sig fint som lågprisföretaget som arbetar friskt och ungt och som hela
tiden förnyar sig.”
still could afford a generous couch. Bra Bohag’s interior cost more than twice as much as Ikea’s, which led the jury to criticize them for not “stimulating the young according to a home ideal that is changing, like the young people themselves, and not burdened by all conventions,” concluding that it was not enough to add color to live up to the headline “young.” Although Bra Bohag’s furniture might last a lifetime, the jury concluded that, “unfortunately, with this rather exclusive seating group, one is heading for a living room for adults only.” The Co-op got better reviews, having furnished its interior more in line with Ikea’s, with the robust and sturdy birch furniture Fridolin that was designed for summer houses, suggesting a “solid and fresh” interior.

In the following years, 1967–1968, Allt i Hemmet featured similar competitions on the ideal furnishing of a one-bedroom apartment for a young couple, including Ikea, the Co-op, and Bra Bohag. These promoted the companies and gave their products a wider audience than they could have through their catalogs alone. Allt i Hemmet’s consumer guidance on furniture was an asset, especially for Ikea.

52 Ibid., 31.
53 Ibid., 22. Swedish text: “De unga som sätter bo idag skulle gärna stimuleras till ett hemideal som är föränderligt, liksom ungdomarna själva och inte tyngt av alla konventioner. . . med den här rätt exklusiva sittgruppen har man nog tyvärr fått för ett barnförbjudet vardagsrum.” While HC also got good reviews, such as “fresh, light, honest,” “fräscht, leicht und seriös,” Bodéns was “impersonal and conventional,” “opersonligt och konventionell.” Ibid., 25, 27.
54 Ibid., 29. Swedish text: “rejält och samtidigt fräscht.”
55 In 1967, five companies furnished a one-bedroom apartment for about 5,000 kronor, the maximum amount for a setting-up-home loan. Ikea was the cheapest and the Co-op offered the most refined interior, according to the jury. Bra Bohag was not part of the five, probably because the magazine had already published an article about their launch of cheap furniture that year. Marianne Fredriksson and Birgitta Ek, “Aldrig har vi fått så mycket för pengarna,” Allt i Hemmet 12, no. 9 (1967): 24-37. In 1968, Allt i Hemmet had invited four companies for the same task, but this time without a price limit. The Co-op (KF) and Ikea offered the cheapest examples, costing about the same (3,545 and 3,916 kronor respectively), while the company representing Bra Bohag (Åhlbergs) provided furnishings that cost 9,352. Gösta Westerberg Möbler AB presented furnishings that cost about three times as much as the Co-op and Ikea, 11,839, which may have contributed to it receiving the lowest scores by the professional jury, 10 points as compared with
Youthful Pine for Young Consumers

Through their collection of pine furniture, Ikea pioneered the promotion of this inexpensive material for the living room. Featuring a facsimile of the cover of *Allt i Hemmet* with the heading “Where is the cheapest furniture?” the 1967 Ikea catalog welcomed the magazine’s positive response. Allt i Hemmet’s 1966 setting-up-home feature, with its competition between companies, spurred a new ideal of living, while placing Ikea’s success in a consumer guidance context.

Highlighting “the youthful pine line,” the 1967 Ikea catalog presented images of the competing interior and the jury’s comments, describing the blond wood as “light, fresh pine furniture for an open and friendly interior,” a contrast to the fashionable exotic woods at the time. Under the headline “Live youthfully—live with pine,” Ikea advertised in *Allt i Hemmet* with an interior similar to that in the competition. In contrast to the 1965 catalog, there were no associations with summer cottages or basement recreation rooms (gillestugor): “The pine line of Ikea’s new collection paves the way for
pine in the living room—in our home environment. A very beautiful wood gives a light and beautiful interior.”

Ikea laid the foundation for the great popularity of pine furnishings in Sweden throughout the 1970s. The promotion of pine in modern design was also a nod to Nordic culture and the home of artists Karin and Carl Larsson. Along with spruce, pine is the most common wood in northern Europe, followed by birch. Under the heading “Pine (Pinus silvestris) in our hearts,” the “fresh and cozy” interior of the 1968 Ikea catalog features a living room with green-stained pine cabinets next to a green couch with contrasting orange-red cushions, a color combination well known from Sundborn. (Fig. 11.11) The catalog highlights how designers Karin Mobring, Erik Wørts, and Gillis Lundgren had created a “pine line” with color and a modern view on comfort. Educated by Carl Malmsten, Mobring had learned the importance of soft lines and sought inspiration from nature, folk art, and vernacular furniture.

While Bra bohag featured nothing in pine at this time, by 1970 the Co-op also presented pine in their catalog in a couple of vernacular-inspired interiors of red chairs

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with straw seats and the rustic series Gläntan. Under the headline “Easygoing leisure,”
the Co-op marketed them “as suitable in the city as in the country.”61

In their pine and birch series respectively, Ikea and the Co-op had found a niche for
providing cheap furniture for young couples setting up home, a niche that Allt i Hemmet
also acknowledged and acclaimed. The Co-op had shown Sune Fromell’s “robust and
rustic” birch series Fridolin in the living room of the 1966 competition. Designed for
decorating a summer house, the Co-op started promoting Fridolin for a dining area in the
urban household, “where its fresh blondness gives a welcoming impression.”62 According
to Allt i Hemmet, Ikea met the needs of “everyone who likes delightful furniture, the
Swedish blond,” and those who preferred “robust furniture” could find it at the Co-op.63
Only Bra bohag had failed to deliver cheap, good, and young furniture for Allt i
Hemmet’s 1966 competition. The rustic pine furniture of Ikea and the Co-op, also
mediated by Allt i Hemmet, paved the way for a pine trend of the 1970s that expressed
both the longing for a rural past and a taste for unconventional furnishings.

As a cheap, simple alternative to one of the “show-off traps,” Larsson promoted
warehouse shelves made of pine instead of conventional shelving and storage systems

61 One interior featured the folding table Taverna, also available in birch, red chairs with straw seats Jär;
and shelves Louisiana, and the other the dining set Gläntan, including cupboard, of vernacular type placed
lika bra i stan som på landet.”
blondhet ger ett välkommande intryck.” Although Fridolin had been featured in a living room in Allt i
Hemmet's 1966 setting-up-home feature, the 1967-68 catalog promoted it for the summer house, in a
version lacquered in red resembling furniture in the Larsson house. KF Interiör, Nytt hem 1967-68, no. 2
(Stockholm: KF Interiör, 1967), 27 Fridolin was the nature-loving, national romantic alter ego of poet and
Nobel laureate Erik Axel Karlfeldt (1864–1931), thus associating the series with an idealized rural past.
möbeln, den svenskt blonda, har kunnat köpa billigligt på IKEA. * Och alla som velat ha robusta möbler har
kunnat få dem till överkomligt pris hos KF.”
constructed from fine woods. They were open at the back and on the sides, and were simply put together from plain pine boards that cost less than 700 kronor for a whole wall. To make up for their simplicity, Larsson had painted the wall behind in a warm red color for her 1967 feature. (Fig. 11.12) She put all activities on the wall: a calm section with books, magazines, and extra pillows for sitting on the floor; another section for television, film projector, record player, and records; then “the drawing-room shelf” with inherited glass pieces, African sculptures, a globe, and a complete tea set ready to use; and, lastly, the sewing and craft section with many small drawers for handicraft supplies and fabrics. “Warehouse shelves are music to my ears,” Larsson concluded about this cheap and space-saving arrangement, which made the table, TV bench, and chest of drawers unnecessary.\(^{64}\)

Ikea’s young decorators found their models for displays in *Allt i Hemmet*, the NK-shop (where Larsson was in charge), and in the exhibitions of the SSF, as Kerstin Wickman has observed.\(^{65}\) Larsson and *Allt i Hemmet* were so influential in promoting new ideals that the simple pine shelves, such as *Ivar* from Ikea, moved from storage areas into many Swedish living rooms in the 1970s.\(^{66}\) Just as Larsson had suggested in *Allt i Hemmet* in 1967, Ikea dared to show warehouse shelves in a living room setting with people lounging in low-seating furniture made of particleboard.\(^{67}\) (Fig. 11.13) This image, prominently featured in the 1971 Ikea catalog, strengthened the promotion of


\(^{65}\) Wickman, “Hemmet,” 220.


unconventional, informal furnishings. In 1968, Ikea’s Lennart Ekmark slipped the storage shelf into store displays at Kungens kurva and compared it to a pair of jeans among suits: “We needed something that mirrored the time and the new ideals of style.” As Monica Boman has observed, “Ikea rode the wave of the left and the youth revolt of the 1960s,” displaying revolutionary posters in the interiors of the store outside Stockholm.

**Interiors Catering to Youthful Taste**

Young, unconventional, and cheap—*Allt i Hemmet*’s rhetoric and representations of ideal interiors for young people set a tone that others followed: Ikea, Bra bohag, and eventually the Co-op. In their 1967–68 catalog, Bra bohag presented the white-lacquered *Linjett* series that would give the room a “young, modern, groovy” impression. In contrast to the ideal of the early 1960s, Bra bohag acknowledged that it “might not last a lifetime (as a previous generation required) but it will work well for a long time.”

In addition to its “youthful pine line” of 1967, the 1968 Ikea catalog launched several furniture series made of cheap particleboard as young, fun, and unconventional: *Pop 68, Katinka* and *Karusell*, “fun things happening to us on the way to an exciting furniture future . . . in line with the times, close to the young generation’s colorful and

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68 “Grattis Ivar, 50 år!,” *Kupé*, no. 1-2, 2018, 13. The pine shelf, now called *Ivar*, celebrated 50 years in 2018, and Ikea developed it to include cupboards and other utensils in white metal. Swedish text: “Ivar var som möblernas jeans i förhållande till kostymhyllorna i utställningen. Vi behövde något som speglade tidsandan och nya stilideal.”


somewhat revolutionary taste,” yet “comfortable and functional.” Robin was presented as “completely liberated from conventional thinking about form” for “the young generation setting up home,” young people of the pop age who “cannot accept a home in teak or jacaranda,” as well as the “robust and fun” Galleri and Campo: “unaffected, natural, and fun.” To highlight the youthful furniture, Ikea did not present a furnished apartment for a young couple setting up home as they had done since 1962, but featured Pop 68 as the catalog’s first interior. (Fig. 11.14) Understanding that this generation wanted to distinguish itself from their parents, the company offered colorful furniture of lacquered particleboard, in contrast to conventional furnishings in exotic solid wood or wood veneer. By 1970, the Co-op launched a “young line” in their catalog, representing informality and unconventional living. Laban and Spika were particleboard furniture you could mount yourself.

The youthful and informal approach appeared in floorbound furniture. In the 1970 Co-op catalog, a young woman dressed in pants is casually reclining in the low Laban couch, magazine in hand and shoes off. The couch looks soft and comfortable with its brown corduroy fabric and loose cushions; it is long enough to support the entire body. The support is made of particleboard and the filling is torn foam, in other words cheap materials that may not last a lifetime, as the Co-op explains in its introduction—but they are cheap and suitable for “young consumers” and those with a “young approach to

life.” It was evident that this “seating furniture”—it is not even called a couch—was something new in terms of informality and unconventional living, a sense that was reinforced in the advertisement featured in Allt i Hemmet. (Fig. 11.15) The setting was the same, but the woman had changed her position slightly to recline in the corner, while the copy explained the intended life with Laban: “The young line in Domus. Laban, to lie down in, to jump on, to sit on, to fumble in, to swell in, to turn a somersault on, to be absolutely comfortable with.” Furniture became so floorbound that eventually it was just “a pile to socialize in,” akin to an illustration showing a young woman lounging on a pile of corduroy foam cushions, Modell 6+2, in the 1970 Ikea catalog. (Fig. 11.16)

Bra bohag also promoted the new, floorbound comfort, which Allt i Hemmet approved. Previously, the magazine had sharply criticized Bra Bohag for being “exclusive, that is, expensive, child-unfriendly, and conventional.” But Ek hoped that the critique had stimulated and challenged them. In 1967, she reported that Bra Bohag now had “cheap furniture for the many many people who have been wishing for something

73 People were not featured in their catalogs until 1970, except for some covers in the 1950s and a few brochures. KF Interiör, Nytt Vär/vinter 1970, 3. Swedish text: “För dig som är ung konsument – och för dig som ser ungt på tillvaron”. The Co-op introduced the Laban seating furniture in the 1969-70 catalog stating: “This is Laban – a construction kit of particleboard with pre-drilled holes that one easily mounts oneself.” It comprised three modules to combine to for example a “long-long couch” or a “cozy corner to cuddle up in.” In this catalog, they also presented the whole series of Spika furniture covering work, store, and sleep. KF Interiör, Nytt Hem Interiör, no. 4 (Stockholm: KF Interiör, 1969), 18-19, 44-45. Swedish text: “Här är Laban – en byggsats i spånplatta med förborrade hål som man lätt monterar ihop själv.” “Flera rektanglar efter varandra blir lång-lång soffa och två vinkelställda rektanglar blir ett skönt sitthörn att krypa upp i.” A signifier of the time, the Nordic Museum acquired Laban 1990. See www.digitaltmuseum.se, NM.0316066+.

74 “Domus” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 15, no. 4 (1970). Swedish text: “Ung linje i Domus Laban, att ligga i. att hoppa på. att sitta på. att fumla i. att pösa i. att kullerbytta på. att ha det störtskönt med.”

75 Ikea, Katalog 1970, 168. Swedish text: “En hög att umgås i”, “ligghög”. Floorbound furniture was coming, and, in their fall/winter catalog 1970, the Co-op featured a similar idea with corduroy cushions that were not sewn together. KF Interiör, Nytt Hem Hösten/vintern 1970, no. 6 (Stockholm: KF Interiör, 1970), 14.
warm, cozy, comfortable.” Bra bohag could finally compete with Ikea and the Co-op in filling a gap on the market, according to Ek.76

Beyond its youthful approach to furniture design, Ikea also understood the importance of hiring young designers. Two of these, Charlotte Rude and Hjördis Olsson-Une, had studied together at Konstfack; in 1968, Ikea gave them free rein with a variety of materials in an attempt to inspire the company’s in-house designers. In the course of five years, they designed cushions for lying on (such as Modell 6+2), particleboard and children’s furniture, as well as the ball pit for children that has become a feature in Ikea stores.77 Bra Bohag also collaborated with students from Konstfack, but only as a trial. The colorful orange-yellow-and-white couches and armchairs that the students developed were presented in the 1967–1968 catalog as “of course radical, but—surprisingly enough, also amazingly sensible in their opposition to conventions.”78 (Fig. 11.17)

76 Ek, “Nytt billig,” 28-33. The magazine featured three living rooms furnished with new, cheaper couches with removable covers and foam cushions set in metal frames instead of coil springs and wooden frames. Each furnishing cost about 2,500 kronor, the same that cheap furniture companies often used to furnish a living room when Allt i Hemmet held competitions on the best and the cheapest living room. One room had both a seating group and a dining place, another bookshelf and a seating group, and the third version was for those who wanted to spend money on the “dream couch” and a comfortable carpet. Swedish text: “exklusivt, (d v s dyrt), barnovänligt och konventionellt.” “Men nu kommer den billiga möbeln för de många många som önskat sig det ombonade, det mysiga, bekväma.” Birgitta Ek, “RRRRRRRTSCH... så här lätt byter man klädsel!,” Allt i Hemmet 12, no. 3 (1967): 52-53. The white-lacquered tables as well as storage and shelving system were from the series Linjett.
77 Atle Bjarnestam, *Ikea – design och identitet*, 76-80, 245.
78 Bra bohag, *Bra bohag 1967/68*, 30-31. Swedish text: “Resultatet blev naturligtvis radikalt, men – det blev, överraskande nog, också så förbluffande förnuftigt i sin opposition mot konventioner.” Multoman was designed by Jan Ahlin, Jan Dranger, Martin Eiserman, and Johan Huldt for Dux. While suggesting that one of the largest furniture producers sought to attract younger audiences, Hedvig Hedqvist notes that it was just a temporary trial. Dranger and Huldt went on to create the group Innovator to reach their fellow young clients with furniture of unconventional materials in flat packaging. They had also experimented with the furniture series Well, made by corrugated cardboard. Hedvig Hedqvist, *1900-2002: Svensk form*, 135-36. Innovator later designed for Ikea. Atle Bjarnestam, *Ikea – design och identitet*, 80.
Child-friendly Furniture for the Living Room

Above all, the children’s right to space and life lay at the heart of Allt i Hemmet’s mission, a message that would become more pronounced at Bra bohag and Ikea. A 1964 sociological investigation that interviewed 400 Stockholm families in rental apartments revealed that none of them let their children play in the living room.\textsuperscript{79} If the living room served as a parlor, then only the room left was the bedroom or the kitchen: the children had no proper place in the home. The Million Program offered the new norm of a two-bedroom apartment as a minimum for a family, but it had not yet become a reality.

Although Fredriksson had defended the parlor and women’s need for space in articles published in the 1950s, she never proposed co-opting space at the expense of the children. She later described the expensive interior in the 1965 setting-up-home feature: “and worst of all—one gets stuck in a lifestyle that poorly suits the young family. This room will certainly become forbidden for children, a constant ‘be careful, naughty, naughty!’ Even though the family only has a one-bedroom apartment, the so-called living room becomes and remains a parlor.”\textsuperscript{80} In contrast, she noted how welcoming the cheap living room was for children. (See fig. 11.2) There were no status symbols, no upholstered dining chairs, fine sofas, or wall-to-wall carpeting in such a space. Her statement added to the shifting, more generous view of consumption in the latter half of the 1960s, which saw home furnishings as changeable depending on the situation in life,

\textsuperscript{79} Fredriksson and Oljelund, “bo ungt... bo billigt,” 7-8. The investigation that the article referred to was done by Carin Boalt and the National Institute of Building Research (Statens institut för byggnadsforskning) and published in July 1964: “Hyreslägenheter i Stockholm.”
not purchased to showcase an aspirational lifestyle. Underscoring the simple fact that children do not care how hard it is to remove jam spilled on the sofa or scratches made on the cupboard, Fredriksson concluded, “that is how The Parlor for Adults Only arises.” This was still a common state of affairs.\(^81\)

Seemingly taking Fredriksson’s words literally, the Bra bohag and Ikea catalogs began conveying a similar rhetoric about child-friendliness and unconventional furniture, as opposed to impractical status symbols. In their 1967–68 catalog, Bra bohag chose a completely different approach from previous catalogs. Whereas they had once been more like a magazine, the new catalog was smaller and thicker. The previous catalogs recognized that “many of the interiors seem exclusive,” but the price might be a “surprise,” the exclusive seating group *Solliden* (named after the royal summer palace) was placed next to an interior with two matching couches called *Pasadena*, reflecting imagined, informal California living.\(^82\) In contrast, the 1967–68 catalog began by exclaiming, “live youthfully and practically—live with ZIP!” featuring a young girl and her mother putting on the removable furnishing fabric equipped with zippers, fresh from the cleaner, on a couch.\(^83\) (Fig. 11.18) The floorbound couch was part of the cheap

\(^{81}\) Ibid. 7-8. “This living room will never be forbidden to children, it is ready for novelties, and replacing one thing or the other does not cost more than one can afford when one is surer of one’s real needs.” Swedish text: “Det här vardagsrummet blir heller aldrig barnförbudet, det är öppet för nyheter, har inte kostat mer än att man har råd att byta ut en och annan sak när man blivit säkrare på vad man verkligen behöver.”  “På så sätt uppstår Det Barnförbjudna Finrummet.”


furniture that Ek had discussed in Allt i Hemmet. Bra bohag’s accompanying text, the first in the catalog, spoke of a “revolution” not only in fashion but also in home furnishing and new consumer habits: “The way of life has changed. Gone are the parlors, where children never were allowed, where nothing could be touched.”\textsuperscript{84} The wording could have been taken directly from Allt i Hemmet, which had long championed child-friendly living rooms.

For the first time, Bra bohag featured young children in their 1967–68 catalog. Two children are seen watching television while eating cake and drinking orange squash on the couch, with one foot in a tennis shoe up on the upholstery. The image argued for the removable, easy-to-dry-clean fabric, which was also treated to prevent spots. The caption reaffirmed that “in most modern young families, it is absolutely natural that the entire home be available to children.”\textsuperscript{85}

It was clear from this image that the child-friendly ideal promoted by Allt i Hemmet had spread to Bra bohag. The washable covers followed the general tendency to simplify home furnishings. Ek praised the flexibility of the couches with their removable covers: “we can have a red room in the winter and a blue one in the summer. And we can allow ourselves and our kids to be their own masters, wear, spill, use this furniture. The covers are washable!”\textsuperscript{86}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 3. Swedish text: “Sättet att leva har blivit annorlunda. Borta är finrummen, dit barnen aldrig fick komma, där ingenting fick röras.”
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 7. Swedish text: “I de flesta moderna unga familjer finner man det fullkomligt självklart, att hemmet skall vara helt barnstillåtet.”
\end{flushright}
In 1968, Ikea promoted for the first time the children’s right to be in the living room, exclaiming: “A giant step toward the truly family-friendly living environment!” However, the company took a slightly different approach than Bra Bohag. While stating that the days of the “parlor in the family home” would soon be gone, Ikea reassured readers that “one does not have to give up beautiful furniture and fine furnishing fabrics” thanks to the new washable, removable covers protecting the couch’s ordinary fabric:

“Now kids! Please play on the fine sofa with its protective furnishing fabric... The children’s sticky hands and dangerously sticky lollipops are not the only serious threats to your furnishing fabric.” In order to save the fabric from daily wear and tear, Ikea thus suggested to buy a protective covering in the fabric Polkett in green, blue, or orange, suitable for several of Ikea’s couches. In 1969, Ikea went a step further and featured people in some of the interiors, including a child on the first spread sitting in the new floorbound foam furniture called Trofé, available for both children and adults.

In contrast, the Co-op did not speak specifically about children in the living room, and people were not featured in their catalogs until 1970. But they had produced children’s furniture for decades, affirming in 1967–68 that, “one does not merely buy furniture and textiles. One buys a way of living too. Considering each other, with space for the kids. And elbow room for adult life.” Their 1970 “Young line” included the

88 Ikea, Katalog 1969, 2-3.
child-friendly particleboard couch Laban. With Bra bohag, Ikea, and the Co-op advocating along the same lines, Allt i Hemmet had established that an ideal home for a young couple should be flexible, child friendly, and non-status oriented, preferably with some do-it-yourself projects to bring costs down.

**Continuity in Consumer Guidance**

Quality and consumer guidance were important, even though furniture was made of cheap and simple materials. Allt i Hemmet’s 1965 setting-up home special included serious tests and comparisons of beds and tables, from the cheapest Ikea bed to the most expensive Dux model. Allt i Hemmet gave substantial consumer guidance through diagrams indicating measurements, material, durability, and workmanship, pointing to the research conducted by Erik Berglund and his SSF colleagues, just as Bra Bohag and others had done in previous years. In 1966, Allt i Hemmet invited Ikea, the Co-op, Bra bohag, and others to furnish a living room, and they went further, evaluating some of the furniture in detail and sending a chair from each interior to the testing lab of the SSF. Furniture research was so important at the time that Erik Berglund became the head of a new institute, Möbelinstitutet, in 1967. Under the headline “Why pay more?”, the magazine instilled a sense of consumer power by encouraging readers to compare prices in

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91 Ek, “En bra säng för halva priset,” 28-31, 85; Oljelund, “Varför sitta och trängas?,” 32-35. As part of the yearly setting-up-home feature, the magazine complained that there were still no VDN norms to help determine what was hiding under the bed’s fabric, going so far as to hire an upholsterer recommended by the SSF to examine four beds. In addition, experts of the same organization tested and compared five dining/kitchen tables.
93 “Vi har fått ett möbelinstitut,” Allt i Hemmet 12, no. 9 (1967): 117; Berglund, *Tala om kvalitet*. 
different stores around the country. According to Ek, there was money to save, as long as delivery was free.

The mid-1960s was a time of great changes in retail. Consumers had learned to drive to furniture department stores along the main roads, such as Ikea in Kungens kurva, which had opened in 1965. At this time, the Co-op was Ikea’s key competitor, but there were also other big furniture stores opening outside cities along the national roads, making them easily reachable by car. Taking consumer guidance seriously, Allt i Hemmet reported from a furniture tour in which they reviewed nine such large independent furniture stores and reported on the development plans of the Co-op and Ikea around the country.

For the Co-op, an organization long devoted to consumer advocacy and with a membership of 1.4 million families, quality control was important. The catalog explained how testing machines were used to evaluate textiles, furniture, and lamps in their laboratory, following the VDN declaration supporting easy access to product information. New editions of their setting-up-home book Sätta bo used the same images of Malmsten sofas and had only minor changes in the text. From the mid-1960s to mid-1970s, the Co-op published a whole series of thorough consumer guidance brochures under the title “It pays to know,” covering themes such as furniture, lighting, bed

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97 Henrikson-Abelin, Sätta bo, 4th ed. (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1968) and 5th ed. (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1969). The print runs for these editions reveal how popular the book was. From 1962 to 1971, 96,000 copies were printed. Updated information included, for example, wall-to-wall carpeting and a new type of child-friendly seating furniture made of plastic foam with colorful removable fabric, something that was highlighted in the Ikea and Bra bohag catalogs. Ibid., 8.
equipment, cooking utensils, and tools, all available in the Domus and other Co-op stores.98

Despite its promotion of do-it-yourself particleboard furniture like Spika and Laban, the Co-op continued to support the ideals of high quality, a seeming contradiction that nevertheless followed modernist notions. Spika and Laban furniture did not pretend to be anything other than cheap particleboard, which made the approach honest, based on the proven strength of the material. The notion of quality even in inexpensive furniture was important, according to design historian Åke Livstedt. He recalled how, in the 1960s, he had furnished his space with simple wooden crates from the brewery, noting that they fit his LPs perfectly and had fine dovetail joints.99 Hence, the visible material and equally visible, solid construction adhered to modernist notions of honesty and functionality. The wooden crate and the Spika shelf were as simple as they could be.

Ikea also concentrated on consumer guidance and quality control, spurred by the 1964 Allt i Hemmet feature that ended all contentious talk about cheap furniture’s wretched quality.100 Hired in 1969, Bo Wadling earned a place in the company’s history by installing testing machines near store entrances, torturing Ikea’s chairs before customers’ eyes.101 Explaining the concept of “low price with meaning,” Ingvar Kamprad affirmed in the 1969 catalog that Ikea’s VDN testing machines worked around the clock

98 Kooperativa förbundet, Tjäna på att veta om möbler (Stockholm: Konsumentinformationen Kooperativa förbundet, 1968). The Royal Library and the library of the Nordic Museum have editions of this title. The content followed the same principles as those promoted in the early 1960s. For example, Erik Berglund provided a checklist with consumer questions regarding the furniture’s measurements, construction, and materials.
100 Torekull, Leading by Design, 71.
101 Ibid.
and that the product development was sharpened to live up to “a good and functional
design as well as high technical quality.”

Ikea fully embraced the logic of quality. While the 1960 catalog briefly mentioned
the “torture machine,” the 1969 catalog showed the importance of quality control on three
full pages. Ikea’s own designs made up 75 percent of the assortment. Similar to the Co-
op, Ikea had their own construction department solving the details of construction, their
own model chamber making craft-based prototypes, their own textile laboratory for
testing the quality, and their own testing room to assess the products according to the
VDN product information. Like the Co-op, Ikea also provided consumer guidance in
separate brochures. Their alignment with ambitious consumer guidance efforts of the
time contributed to the success of Ikea.

Ever since Allt i Hemmet included Ikea furniture in 1964, the magazine promoted
furniture from Ikea and the Co-op in their setting-up-home features. In the 1968–69 series
“ABCs for people setting up home,” the special issue on how to choose furniture
included 32 drawings of furniture, out of which about two-thirds came from Ikea and the
Co-op: 11 from Ikea, nine from the Co-op, six from Bra Bohag (Dux), and six from other
furniture producers. Furthering Fredriksson’s mission in “live youthfully... live
economically,” the ABCs article advised young couples setting up home to take it easy

102 Möbel-Ikéa, Inredningskatalog -60, 4; Katalog 1969, 5, 10-12. The third page presented facts about
materials, such as a see-through drawing of upholstery made with a polyether core. Swedish text: “Lågpris
med mening,” “En god och funktionell formgivning och hög teknisk kvalitet,” “tortyrmaskin.”
This article was the first in a series of seven setting-up-home guidance articles, followed by information on
how to place furniture (no. 11), how to choose and place light fixtures (no. 12), how to choose household
machines (no. 1, 1969), how to choose colors and patterns (no. 2, 1969), which household goods are
appropriate for the table (no. 4, 1969), and how to select linen and other textiles (no. 5, 1969).
and not buy everything at once—to “ignore what mother, father, aunt, and friends think” and to “buy cheap furniture instead of expensive pieces”—in order to avoid expensive mistakes. While God bostad assumed that people always had a wall of shelves and storage at their disposal, Allt i Hemmet only included such an arrangement in one sample drawing of a couple who collected records. No shelves appear in the living room of the couple that entertained friends at home with dinner and dancing.104 Once again, Allt i Hemmet promoted informal living without following conventions, focusing instead on interests and needs.

Furniture or Safari?

By 1969, there was a clear and definite shift from former habits of prudent saving, such as denying oneself Danish rolls, toward adopting the new possibilities offered by a consumer society. Taking the advice to buy cheap rather than for a lifetime a step further, Allt i Hemmet turned the setting-up-home article into a challenge: “A young couple about to set up their home ponders the question: furniture or safari? Both are tempting. What is the best way to spend 6,500 kronor?”105 (Fig. 11.19) The likely fictional couple appears in two images, one in which they look rather bored trying a couch in a furniture store, while in the other they look up, full of expectation, in front of a giant elephant in a museum.

In its characteristically pedagogical voice, the magazine envisioned the challenges facing a young couple, Inga and Rune, who have finally moved in together. They have saved money and collected advice from parents and other wise people: “Consider carefully! Furniture should last your whole life. Choose quality ... beautiful ... durable (oh, think about the little ones who will be on the way) ... comfortable ... solid, solid!”

The quote is a condensed parody of the kind of setting-up-home advice that was so prevalent in the first half of the 1960s. By this time, however, Allt i Hemmet had changed its approach. The dilemma presented by the article—“furniture or safari?”—brought matters to a head. According to the story, one evening a friend of Inga and Rune reminded them of their dream to go on a safari: “Listen to a wise man: repaint and freshen up the furniture you already have. Then take the money that’s left ... there, you have your safari!” Favoring a personal experience, such as a trip, over an investment in furniture showed the new possibilities and implications of consumer choice.

For the first time, Allt i Hemmet advised following one’s dreams. A few years before, the magazine had suggested that couples avoid creating status-filled living rooms that would be forbidden to children, buy with cash instead of credit, and purchase dishwashers instead of expensive beds. The aim at the time had been on fostering reasonable, practical consumption. The couple in the 1969 article had saved 8,000 kronor. On one hand, being a wholesome, consumer-guidance oriented magazine, the Allt i

106 Ibid., 66. Swedish text: “– Tänk er för! Möbler ska räcka livet ut. Välj kvalitet ... vackert ... tåligt (åh, tänk på de små som kommer) ... bekvämt ... rejält, rejält!”
107 Ibid. Swedish text: “Lyssna till en vis man: måla om och friska upp de möbler ni redan har. Ta sen pengarna som blir över ... där är safari!”
*Hemmet* introduction gave solid alternatives to choosing a safari, such as saving for studies, children, or a bigger home, or buying household appliances, a car, or a color TV. On the other hand, through a do-it-yourself approach and furniture that would not last a lifetime, the magazine was clearly encouraging young people to follow their dreams, although the article concluded: “We do not want to advise. But on the following spreads, the alternatives are presented, realized. Safari or sofa—which would YOU choose...?”

To drive home the point, the magazine’s interior designer Ingald Andersson had arranged two interiors that at first glance looked similar: coffee table, orange couch, green armchair, orange lamp, green plants, and a television placed in the shelves and storage units. (Figs. 11.20-21) Costing 8,000 kronor, the expensive interior included conventional choices such as a dining set, a dinner service, and a white, neutral curtain. The dining area in this image is not terribly appealing, since the table is not set and there is no tablecloth, or flowers, just piles of plates and glasses set in a row against white walls. In contrast, the cheap interior that cost 1,500 kronor features a colorful Marimekko curtain, tying in associations with Op art and youth culture with a bold pattern that looks like an enormous eye. Large orange and yellow candles are lit below. There is no dining table. The already colorful spread of the cheap interior includes a color image of giraffes looking curiously at the reader.

Without prejudice or judgement, *Allt i Hemmet* conveyed a real choice between the values of experience and material investment. The overt do-it-yourself mission of the

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magazine is clear: *Allt i Hemmet* offers realistic strategies such as refreshing old furniture with new fabric; cutting an old desk’s legs to turn it into a coffee table, with the help of yellow paint; and building your own furniture out of particleboard with blue-painted *Spika* shelves and yellow-painted beds covered by orange fabric and piles of pillows. In short, an unconventional, cheap interior meant that the couple could also afford a safari trip for 6,500 kronor. The comparatively expensive interior displayed furniture available in the Bra bohag catalog, such as the oak table and shelving system *Variett*.

While inexpensive, the interior was not of poor quality and suited the needs of Inga and Rune. The *Spika* shelves and other pieces of particleboard furniture adhered to modernist notions of honesty. The shelf construction had proven as durable as possible thanks to the special type of nails. The wicker chair was also made of a plain but durable material, in a traditional form that lasted a long time; thus, it was not merely a fashionable piece of furniture. The vivid Marimekko fabric was not cheap, costing almost five times as much as the yellow fabric next to it. Saving on expensive furniture gave the owner freedom to improvise and be lavish with fabrics and colors, as the magazine had advised in the 1962 setting-up-home supplement.109 In this way, the cheap interior symbolized an ideal that was “correct” in terms of consumer values, while remaining fashionable and current. In a break from the dichotomy between the mass-consuming Slösa, the waster, and the economic Spara, the saver—both of whom were equally materialistic—the generation setting up home in the late 1960s was politically aware and driven by ideals like anticapitalism, as Husz points out. Replacing Spara, the saver, they

109 Ek and Larsson, “Vi gifter oss!,” 1.
stood against the waster. Cheap particleboard, do-it-yourself projects, and secondhand furniture thereby represented anticommercial, antimaterialistic consumption.

Demonstrating her ability to interpret her time, Fredriksson understood that the generation of 1968 would chose the “neo-simple” mode of living as a way to distinguish themselves from the dominant society through their consumption choices. With Ikea, Bra bohag, and the Co-op as participants in this endeavor, the magazine served as a driving force in shifting consumption ideals regarding home furnishings in Sweden in the late 1960s.

The safari trip that Allt i Hemmet had chosen as an alternative contrasted the hedonistic consumption that the 1962–63 Bra bohag catalog distinguished from the prudent saving for high-quality home furnishings, “car and villa and fur coat and the trip to Canary Islands.” The safari was not just an exotic choice: it supported Rune’s interest in photography, according to the article. Thus, consumption perceived as educational and serious was compared to a charter trip for sun bathing on the Canary Islands, which was a mainstream choice, although still new and glamorous at the time. In this way, Allt i Hemmet had carefully crafted a challenge, with alternatives that were relatable to the young generation in the late 1960s. Above all, the 1969 setting-up-home feature made it clear that consumption of something as ephemeral as an experience was acceptable, at least as a learning experience.
Chapter Twelve

Conventional or Activity-Based Living Rooms and Bedrooms

Every moment of change is full of continuity.¹ At the same time that Bra bohag, Ikea, and the Co-op promoted their youthful, unconventional furniture in the late 1960s, their catalogs also featured conventional seating groups, dining sets, and wall-covering shelving and storage systems. The assortment confirmed the findings of God bostad, which in 1960 noted that most families had a seating group and dining set in the living room and that room for storage furniture and television must be available as well.² In 1964, however, God bostad argued that a dining set in the living room might be unnecessary if the kitchen was more spacious.³ While Allt i Hemmet had ideas for the alternative use of dining space, the furniture catalogs kept promoting conventional dining sets and seating groups. This chapter explores how the ideal living and sleeping rooms would become multipurpose rooms, welcoming productive leisure as well as exercise. Especially as it regards bedrooms, this chapter will demonstrate how the promotion of consumption began embracing relaxation without the practical rhetoric of rational housekeeping.

¹ Pat Kirkham, conversation in Stockholm, February 1, 2014.
² Kungl. Bostadsstyrelsen, God bostad 1960, 23.
Changing Traditions for Living Rooms

Prevalent features in the furniture catalogs of the late 1960s included conventional types of furniture, which *Allt i Hemmet* warned against in their setting-up-home features for young couples. In the same 1967–68 catalog in which Bra bohag introduced cheap sofas with removable furnishing fabrics, it was clear that they were targeting other income groups and people at a different moment in their lives. The catalog presented Malmsten’s traditional dining set *Herrgården* (the manor house) as the “secure and warm world” of “quality, honesty, knowledge about the material—we can feel it. We feel at home!” Using a modernist theme of honesty in materials, the catalog further promoted the ideal of timelessness so prevalent in the early 1960s. Bra bohag described the conventional storage and shelving system *Bonett*, in French walnut or oak, as “a good example of Swedish quality production in the middle price range. Timeless, calm, suitable for every environment.” (Fig. 12.1) In the image, next to the shelves, there is an expensive upholstered armchair *Duxiesta 66*, presented as “American in its style” and featuring a reclining and rocking function unusual for Swedish furniture. In addition to the particleboard *Spika* and *Laban* pieces presented in the Co-op’s 1969–70 catalog, the organization promoted the “sober, moderate design” of their walnut dining set with matching shelving and storage units called *Dominett*. (Fig. 12.2)

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5 Ibid., 33. Swedish text: “Bonett är ett gott exempel på svensk kvalitetstillverkning i mellanprisklass. Tidlös, lugn, passar i varje miljö.” “Amerikansk i stilen.”

By focusing on furniture made of high-grade wood, Bra bohag followed Ikea’s older visual rhetoric, complete with men, alcohol, and suggestive settings that contrasted greatly with its earlier, more wholesome approach. The stereotypical image of a masculine environment was evoked in a collection of pipes and cigar boxes next to a cocktail cabinet. The 1968–69 catalog reassured readers that the Sonett shelving and storage series featured “truly a substantial cocktail cabinet and not some little glitterbox for dad’s James Bond ambitions.” Taking a page from the Ikea catalog of the 1950s, the Bra bohag catalog described Sonett in walnut: “It looks like the foundation of a posh and distinguished environment. It gives the impression of secure and solid self-esteem.”

Reading personality into things, the consumer might feel as if the furniture could instill such values in its owner. As an alternative in oak, Bra bohag presented the same Sonett series as being more in line with setting-up-home advice, providing a “youthful environment for storage and work” without cocktail cabinet and TV set.

The Co-op featured similar contrasts between conventional and unconventional furniture in their catalogs, but with a more charged ideological meaning. The main difference between the Co-op and the other publications was that the Co-op avoided showing any bottles of alcohol in the cocktail cabinet. Instead, a carafe of clear glass with matching glasses was visible. This approach suited the history of the cooperative

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9 Ibid., 29. Swedish text: “Det är en ungdomlig miljö för förvaring och arbete.” The unit included records and a record player, books, a workplace with an Ericophone, and a typewriter in the cabinet, according to the catalog.
movement, in which most of the young leaders in the early twentieth century were also active in the temperance movement. But in other ways, the Co-op paralleled the merchandise of the other retailers.

High-grade wood was also on Marianne Fredriksson’s list of suspect status symbols in the 1965 setting-up-home feature, but the Co-op and Ikea marketed exotic jacaranda with rational themes. In the 1968–69 catalog, the Co-op even promoted a jacaranda dining set with sideboard, “intended as a more exclusive dining room,” as practical and child friendly: “Jacaranda might seem too luxurious a material for families with children, for example. But this wood is tremendously hard and durable against scratches and hits.” Furthering their ideological roots of thrift and rational consumption, the Co-op justified the high-grade wood that Allt i Hemmet saw as a status symbol, arguing that “jacaranda may well be an investment for the future, paying off even in the short term.”

Timeless furniture for a lifetime was still a message the Co-op supported, but, in contrast, the next spread featured a dining area with an unpainted particleboard table and a couple of Spika shelves instead of a sideboard. (Fig. 12.3)

Ikea did not use arguments about status, as Bra bohag did, but focused on how the lively jacaranda wood veneer would “make the home more interesting and exciting.”

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11 Fredriksson and Oljelund, “bo ungt... bo billigt,” 6.
13 Ibid., 30.
Furthering their business model of providing affordable furniture, Ikea explained that, through their “rational planning of production and distribution, Ikea is also able to provide furniture of jacaranda, which everyone knows is an expensive wood, at prices that surprise and stimulate.” The 1967 Ikea catalog invited its readers to vote for their favorite living room, and the exclusive jacaranda room with its altar-like arrangement with TV set won. (Fig. 12.4) The other alternatives were made of oak, teak, and pine, thus a selection targeting different kinds of taste and budgets. The contrast between the pine and jacaranda rooms evoked the range of Allt i Hemmet’s features, with a cheap and young interior compared to a conventional, expensive interior. (Fig. 12.5) While the pine interior had neither seating group nor wall-covering shelving and storage unit, the winning jacaranda room featured a sofa that cost ten times as much as the daybed-like pine bench with a mattress and a few pillows.


16 Ikea, Katalog 1967, 18-25, Ikea, Katalog 1968, 28-29. There was also a second competition where customers could vote for the bedrooms that were featured later in the catalog. Participants were asked to answer four questions and to write a statement supporting their choice of living room or a slogan for Ikea. The awards ranged from 500 to 10,000 kronor cash. Customers had to place an order to participate. These are the only examples of competitions that I have seen in the Ikea catalogs from the 1950s and 1960s. This edition of the catalog, available in the library of the Nordic Museum, came in early fall. There was also a later edition, where Ikea had replaced the competition with their young and cheap pine furniture on pages 18-19, followed by the same living rooms as those featured in the competition. Ikea’s shelving and storage series of jacaranda veneer, Excellent, became a signifier of the time, which the Nordic Museum confirmed by acquiring it for the permanent collection in 2005. Strengthening its significance and popularity, it was one of sixteen such shelving and storage systems of different kinds of wood featured in the 1968 Ikea catalog. The museum purchased Excellent directly from a couple who had married in 1967 and bought it at Ikea in Almhult the following year. Curator Anna Womack initiated the acquisition and interviewed the owner, Berith Helldén, the transcript of which is also available in the museum archive. The couple used the furniture until the museum acquired it. For general information, see www.digitaltmuseum.se, NM.0328368A-E. Ikea, Katalog 1968, 34-35, 104-19.
Ikea had promoted placing the TV set in the middle of the wall since the late 1950s. But Fredriksson had argued against this, as the TV, in her opinion, should not be treated with such veneration. Ikea’s jacaranda display nonetheless offered an arrangement in which the television was surrounded by some books, candelsticks, a small sculpture, wine glasses and coffee cups, and a concealed cocktail cabinet with lighting. The fluffy beige wall-to-wall carpeting, the brass ashtray on the nesting table, and the brass bar cart contributed to a more lavish impression than the robust pine interior with its vernacular-inspired red rocking chair and rib-back chairs. There was also a dining set. Of the competition’s four living rooms, the jacaranda room was the only one with a TV set visible in the image. With these conventional parts—seating group, dining set, storage furniture, and TV set—in place, Ikea confirmed God bostad’s findings for appointing a typical living room. This may be the key reason why the jacaranda room gained the popular vote.

Using Hobbies and Exercise to Personalize a Room

Challenging the conformity of interiors featured in furniture catalogs and stores, Allt i Hemmet intensified their mission to help people personalize their standardized living room furnishings. Hobbies and exercise were the buzzwords. Even though people had started living in their living rooms, thanks to television, the room itself was still a kind of

18 Fredriksson, “TV ger oss ny möblering,” 16.
parlor for socializing and relaxing, according to the magazine. The sewing machine or photo equipment, markers of typical hobbies at the time, had no space.19

Arguing for activity-based living rooms, the magazine calculated how much money people spent on rent for just the space of a dining set. In ten years, the few dinners eaten there were quite expensive using this formula; for this amount of money, they might as well have enjoyed meals in a restaurant, Allt i Hemmet concluded in 1969. (Fig. 12.6) “A fine little woodworking space in the living room can actually be quite decorative,” interior designer Ingald Andersson reassured the readers, encouraging them to realize their hobbies instead of formal dining. (Figs. 12.7-8) Reminiscent of the active and calm spaces that Co-op and Allt i Hemmet featured in the 1950s, Andersson suggested a calm section for socializing, which would include a seating group, television, and bookshelves. The active section could be used for the stamp collection, sewing machine, vacation photos, important papers, and so on, but it was the wood workshop and hobby room that the magazine highlighted in large images meant to encourage the do-it-yourself trend. Giving more space to children could also be an option.20 In 1966, the magazine had promoted small carpenter’s benches, three of four available at Ikea that could easily be used as a sturdy table with a tabletop fastened on.21

20 Maud Höste, “Här finns plats för något roligare!,” Allt i Hemmet 14, no. 8 (1969): 12-15. Swedish text: “En liten finsnickeriavdelning i vardagsrummet kan faktiskt vara riktigt dekorativ.” The previous year, Lena Larsson had also asked “if we can afford to have all this precious space just as a ‘fine dining place’,” suggesting more flexible solutions or a real workplace with proper lighting. Lena Larsson, “Lena Larsson möblerar: Runt ett matbord,” Allt i Hemmet 13, no. 9 (1968): 54-55. Swedish text: “Har vi råd att låta hela denna värdefulla yta bara vara ‘finmatplats’?”
21 Per Holmgren, “Tänker ni köpa hyvelbänk?,” Allt i Hemmet 11, no. 11 (1966): 52-53, 92-93. This article
Almost half of the many letters that arrived to the magazine’s Readers’ Queries were about problems with the living room: “The big problem was the living room,” Allt i Hemmet concluded, “the room where we have such rooted notions around how it should be furnished and how it should work with seating group, bookshelves, and television.” The furniture trade did not encourage alternative activities. Rather, Bra bohag’s seating groups increased in size, introducing the corner sofa Playboy, which easily fit at least six people, in the 1969–70 catalog. Bra bohag featured just one active living room, with a sewing project spread out on the table and a sewing machine nearby. “Almost everything we do in the living room builds on the seating furniture,” the Co-op stated, confirming the room’s conventional use.

Allt i Hemmet encouraged alternatives to the conventionally furnished living room. Replacing a dining area, the hobby space encouraged exercise through green-painted stall was not as bold, however, since Holmgren suggested placing the carpenter’s bench in the kitchen or the children’s room and, a few issues later, his colleague presented a version with a hobby room to fold out from two closets, including an ironing board, sewing machine, bench, and woodworking tools, to place in the entrance hall, dining area, bedroom, or other space; the article did not yet suggest using the living room for such activities, as in the 1950s or later in the 1960s. Marie Oljelund, text, Rosa Horwitz, idea and interior, “Ett hopfällbart hobbyrum,” Allt i Hemmet 12, no. 3 (1967): 26-27.

Bra bohag, Bra bohag: En tidning för alla hemintresserade 1969/70 (Bra bohag, 1969), 3. Ikea introduced corner sofas in 1970, such as Japp, Zoom-70, and Kensington, in addition to numerous seating groups of 3+2+1, also common in the 1969 catalog. Ikea, Katalog 1970, 14-16.

Bra bohag, Bra bohag 1967/68, 39.


Höste and Andersson, “Vad ska vi göra med vårt vardagsrum?,” 20, 22. Swedish text: “Det stora problemet var vardagsrummet, det rum som vi har så inrotade begrepp om hur det ska möbleras och fungera med soffgrupp, bokhyllor och TV.”

Höste and Andersson, “Vad ska vi göra med vårt vardagsrum?,” 20-27; Carola Goulding, “Bättre rum för hobby,” Allt i Hemmet 13, no. 1 (1968): 23-25; Höste, “Här finns plats för något roligare!,” 11-17; Maud Höste, “Vardagsrum att trivas i,” Allt i Hemmet 14, no. 9 (1969): 26-39. To have a sewing machine available at all times was a common priority, as in the Readers’ Queries about how to combine sewing, writing, and a guest bed in one small room. Elsy Kempe, “Gästrum syrum skrivrum – på 7 kvm!,” Allt i Hemmet 13, no. 9 (1968): 19. Another view into home activities was an article focusing in its entirety on
bars (also known as a Swedish ladder) hanging on the wall. (Fig. 12.9) As an alternative to the woodworking workshop, there was a sewing machine with hot pink fabric, a basket full of colorful yarn, model boats, paint, and brushes. The stamp collector had a table with a bright lamp and magnifying glass. On the wall, there was a noticeboard with children’s drawings, and on the floor a tricycle about to be painted blue. Green-painted particleboard protected the parquet flooring. The work surfaces were placed at an angle, resting on small cabinets with drawers, shelves on metal bars; all resemble Allt i Hemmet’s 1950s articles promoting the living room or the family kitchen as an all-room for sewing and other activities. Apart from exercise, the activities remained remarkably similar, with an emphasis on productive leisure that could occupy the entire family.

While the carpenter’s bench had been a favorite of Allt i Hemmet since the 1950s, the magazine also cheered the new exercise trend. “It’s good to exercise sometimes! The foam mattress on the floor is great for gymnastics. . . . There’s no room for gymnastics in the bedroom, but here there is!” In another feature, the magazine envisioned the family living room as “Spacious! Free floor space for dance and jump-rod exercises.” Under the heading “Now it’s with it with exercise!” Allt i Hemmet had introduced the new trend

how to set up a home office, including storage boxes, files, binders, etc.—in other words, not just a workspace for a typewriter, as in many previous articles and books. This was the first time Allt i Hemmet truly focused on “the home office,” the beginning of a phenomenon that would become much more common. Ingild Andersson, Yvonne Berlin, and Maud Höste, “Skönt att arbeta hemma . . .,” Allt i Hemmet 14, no. 2 (1969): 36-43.

28 Ibid. Swedish text: “Nyttigt med motion emellanåt! Skumplastdynan på golvet är fin att gymnastisera på. . . . Tränga sovrum har inte plats för gymnastik, men här finns det utrymme!”
in 1968. Following its consumer guidance approach, the magazine surveyed rowing machines, cycle exercisers, stall bars, and so on, all with cheerful encouragement: “Use the treadmill and read a book. Row and watch television. Shake your hips and stir a cake.”

Presented as an ideal Christmas present to yourself, the magazine noted that “rowing machines are increasingly common in the weak Swedish people’s home,” as if suggesting that urbanization, an increase in white-collar jobs, and spending power had created this new need. Already the year before, in 1967, the Gustavsberg porcelain factory had begun promoting exercise in the bathroom, arguing that, “it is natural to combine the physical fitness program with hygiene.” Exercise equipment had existed since the nineteenth century, but it was a novelty for private use at home in Sweden. Group training and classes, such as gymnastics for homemakers, were already popular.


32 Ibid., 64. Swedish text: “Roddapparater blir allt vanligare i det kraftlösa svenska folkhemmet.”

33 “Gustavsberg Jazzbalett i badrummet” advertisement, *Allt i Hemmet* 12, no. 10 (1967), and an earlier issue, and no. 6 (1968). Swedish text: “Det blir så naturligt att koppla ihop spänningsprogrammet med den övriga hygienen.” This advertisement had the heading “Jazz ballet in the bathroom” and included a wall bar. Through the exercise trend, Gustavsberg saw a chance to personalize standardized bathrooms, specifically targeting people who were building their own bathrooms in a house or renovating; the company argued against the current standardized bathrooms: “We must liberate ourselves from the routine that has locked the development of the bathroom. Bathtub, washbasin, WC, and bidet make up the standard equipment.” Swedish text: “Vi måste göra oss fria från den slentrian som läst fast badrumsutsöckning. Badkar, tvättställ, wc-stol och bidé är basutrustningen.” With the same message of planning for exercising in the bathroom, Gustavsberg presented a half-naked man riding an exercise bike in a bathroom with mint green washbasin, etc., in one of their ads. “Gustavsberg Motion i badrummet” advertisement, *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 1 and 2 (1969), and perhaps other issues.
The Co-op in Stockholm had emphasized these forms of exercise in the 1940s, and by the 1950s they were on the verge of becoming a movement.\textsuperscript{34}

In their 1970 catalog, Ikea’s “activity room” could have been taken from \textit{Allt i Hemmet}'s features with its stall bars, exercise bikes, tools, and sewing machines. While the magazine suggested such activities for the living room, Ikea introduced specific spaces: “activity room,” “hobby room,” along with “garage” and “storage room.”\textsuperscript{35} (Fig. 12.10) In this way, Ikea encouraged do-it-yourself projects and, for flexibility in terms of space, introduced a foldable work table called Aktivitetsbord (activity table). Ikea sold all these things, along with appropriate storage furniture, and they included tools such as electric drilling machines and saws, as well as planes and carpenter’s benches, all part of the “hobby room.”\textsuperscript{36} In the 1965 catalog, Ikea had presented a hobby table depicted with a drill, electric saw, and other tools in a small image, but in 1970 it became a proper workshop.\textsuperscript{37} In the same year, the Co-op suggested using their all-round Spika shelf in the hobby room, bathroom, or garage.\textsuperscript{38} In this way, among the principal actors on the home


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 111.

\textsuperscript{37} Möbel-Ikea, \textit{Katalog 1965}, 145. The hobby table was part of \textit{Tore}, a series introduced in 1959 with the same usability as KF’s \textit{Växa med läxa}. The Co-op did not present any equivalent to “hobby” or “activity rooms” in their catalogs during the same time.

\textsuperscript{38} KF Interiör, \textit{Nytt hem Vår/sommar 1970}, 12. This was the only reference to such activities in their catalogs, and the living rooms suggested conventional use such as listening to music, reading, etc. A further sign of the popularity of woodworking, the Co-op published a brochure in their series “It pays to know” on tools: Marianne Millgårdh, \textit{Tjäna på att veta om verktyg} (Stockholm: Konsumentinformationen, Kooperativa förbundet, 1968).
furnishing field, *Allt i Hemmet* was quite alone in its efforts to locate various activities, other than dining and watching television, in the living room.

**Challenging Generic Taste with Practicality**

By 1970, *Allt i Hemmet* issued a critique of the generic, conventional interiors featured in furniture stores and catalogs. In one spread, the magazine showed three similar interiors found in the 1970 Co-op, Ikea, and Bra Bohag catalogs. (Fig. 12.11) Rather than provide solutions for combining relaxation, everyday life, and entertainment, the magazine found that the furniture stores provided “a row of new, fine parlors. What else would they be, the prim and proper interiors shown in the furniture stores? Seating groups for the social life and jacaranda shelves for knickknacks. Hard-to-handle fabrics and fragile materials.”

Although the magazine found highlights in the “unpretentious . . . shelves, tables, benches, and chairs,” the article criticized the dominance of furniture sets in the interiors, “most of it severely bound to the dream of an ostentatious home.” In 1970, *Allt i Hemmet* conducted its own survey of 100 households. Observing the living rooms, interior designer Stephan Gip saw a similar pattern with larger seating groups and more furniture in general. He suggests that people’s homes had been influenced by the images of the furniture trade. Ironically, he noted, “how difficult it is for people to create homes

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that works. And that express their personality."\textsuperscript{41} Using the seating group as a case study, Minna Sarantola-Weiss tells a similar story of Finland in the 1970s, where a new, enlarged middle class entered the consumer society: “The ideal of ascetic consumption that had long prevailed became old-fashioned and was replaced by a new, hedonistic consumer.”\textsuperscript{42} In retrospect, decades of promotion of flexible furnishings that fit one’s needs rather than convention had had limited effect. Still in 1970, \textit{Allt i Hemmet’s} observations resembled the results of the 1930s survey of furniture stores highlighting historicist suites. The magazine’s challenge remained finding ways to convince people not to keep up with the Joneses, or the Svenssons, but rather to follow their own needs.

In contrast to such conventional living rooms, the magazine featured three spreads of Carl Malmsten and Bruno Mathsson furniture in blond woods, with rag rugs on the floor and many books in the bookshelves, recalling the Swedish tradition of interiors between “the blond and cool birch meadow” and “the heavy and powerful forest.”\textsuperscript{43} (Fig. 12.12) The text reprised previous features, such as the living room by Malmsten that the readers


chose as their “dream room” in 1965. This interior tradition, Ek explained, “existed with Carl Larsson and has been refined and transmitted by Carl Malmsten.”

The magazine’s underlying goals were in fact quite different from what their article seemed to present: Allt i Hemmet actually sought something other than promoting high-quality expensive Malmsten and Mathsson furniture:

*Don’t think that we mean* a home should be built this way, with things that are completely linked to great designer names such as Carl Malmsten or Bruno Mathsson. Apart from the fact that it would be extremely expensive, it is wrong in other ways. This would lead to anxiety, like one who only dares to swim in shallow water. And an impersonal living space. We don’t want to build up our home as if it were an exhibition.

In this way, the magazine reused the same method as before to turn readers away from traditional interiors. Instead of rejecting revival-style furniture in complete suites, though, the magazine chose traditional furniture by esteemed designers who worked in a national craft tradition. The Malmsten interior was close to the hearts of many Swedes nurturing the nostalgic dream of a rural past, values that were confirmed by readers voting in 1965. By rejecting the designers’ all-encompassing vision, however, Ek compared a room’s perfect unity to a museum or exhibition. All “a new furniture-suite-thinking, status-hunt. A living room must be alive. Old should be mixed with new, the expensive with the cheap.”

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44 “Rart och gammaldags skall rummet vara!,” 84.
To instill the values of modern living, *Allt i Hemmet* presented didactic comparisons between nineteenth-century parlors and interiors at the open-air museum Skansen to discourage emulation of another social class and time. (Fig. 12.13) The magazine went beyond claiming that the bourgeois interiors did not suit today’s lifestyle: it told the story of how upper-class palaces and manor houses spread through nineteenth-century mass production to bourgeois homes and, eventually, in even cheaper versions, to poorer working-class homes. Finally, the magazine showed how traces of this phenomenon still prevailed in contemporary interiors. The approach was inspired by Thorstein Veblen’s and Georg Simmel’s theories of the emulation of the upper classes and the trickle-down effect to the lower. As examples, the magazine included images of the common wall clock with its gilded decorations, a fashionable reprint of nineteenth-century wallpaper, and the chandelier. Instead of stating that such things are status symbols not suitable for our time, the magazine encouraged readers to think about their origin: “Whether one likes these souvenirs or not, it may be useful to know their origin when one tries to arrange things as practically and pleasantly as possible for oneself.” By encouraging such reflection, the magazine asked the reader to question what comes from another social class and time. In view of the gilded wall clock and chandelier, the magazine had changed its opinion from that of the 1950s, when Fredriksson acknowledged that there


were women who wanted their parlor filled with such things as they constructed their own haven. The approach in 1970 was adjusted to a time when more women undertook paid work outside the home and pursued greater political awareness. The key message of the feature was familiar, but it came in a new package.\textsuperscript{50}

To further the message of practicality, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} emulated a vernacular everyday room from an eighteenth-century farmstead at Skansen. Interior designer Stephan Gip had met the same functions and layout, but with modern plastic chairs and a cozy-corner type of bed. (Fig. 12.14) Yet Gip’s interior still did not fit contemporary life, and the magazine concluded, “one cannot just borrow from other times or use old ideals.” Instead, they advised, a consumer must always begin by assessing their own needs in furnishing a new apartment.\textsuperscript{51}

\textit{Allt i Hemmet} had summarized the similarity of the living rooms presented in furniture catalogs and stores. Under Fredriksson’s leadership, the magazine doggedly sought new ways to promote a focus on suitability that so many designers, architects, and organizations had been advocating in Sweden since the days of Ellen Key. The emphasis was on unconventional solutions, chosen according to one’s needs rather than as an emulation of the social structure of the past or a passive acceptance of package deals. Although still offering an “education of taste,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} aimed to make people think, compare, and come to the same conclusion that the editors had reached.

\textsuperscript{50} Ingrid Olausson, “Det nya allrummet?,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 15, no. 13 (1970): 64.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. Swedish text: “att man inte bara kan låna från andra tider eller använda gamla ideal.”
The Bedroom—a Place to Hang Out

While the living room, in spite of Allt i Hemmet’s efforts, remained a parlor in the furniture catalogs, the bedroom became a multipurpose room. With the 1964 feature “lazy and middle aged,” Allt i Hemmet had initiated the idea of a bedroom in which the couple could watch television, drink tea, and relax while the teenagers occupied the living room. Instead of dedicating the bedroom to sleep, late twentieth-century attitudes reclaimed this space for other activities that could be accommodated through new bedroom furniture systems.

Bra bohag continued to market conventional living rooms, though their approach to bedrooms further developed Allt i Hemmet’s idea of a multipurpose bedroom. Architect Åke Hassbjer used the measurements of a standard bedroom of 4.2 x 3 meters and created a complete environment of modules for Dux, arranging them into a multi-activity room for the 1965–66 catalog. (Fig. 12.15) The series was called Atmosfär (Atmosphere).\(^\text{52}\) In addition to the cover, a whole spread is dedicated to this new bedroom series, presented as a “Dream bedroom.” A man dressed in brown pajamas sits in the bed, reading a newspaper while shaving; the electric razor is plugged into a socket next to him. Electric appliances, as evidence of the growing consumer society, strengthened the perceived modernity of this bedroom. On the shelf next to the man, there is an Ericophone and a tape recorder, opposite a television set (white to go with the interior); inside a cabinet,

\[^{52}\text{Lena Larsson participated in the production of several Bra bohag catalogs—she may have styled this photo shoot herself—and her text on life in bed from the 1950s was featured in this catalog as well. Lena Larsson, “Vårt liv i sängen,” Bra bohag 1965/66, 3. While Larsson worked on the photo shoots, Åke Hassbjer was responsible for the final production of the Bra bohag catalogs 1959–1972. Åke Hassbjer, e-mail to author, November 6, 2013.}\]
there is a sewing machine. As a space for active and passive occupations, as well as for rest, the bedroom also included an upholstered armchair.\textsuperscript{53}

The following year, Bra bohag emphasized the bedroom as a kind of private living room for parents, explaining how Atmosfär furnishings could provide for “work, rest, recreation, and sleep—the parents’ own antistress room.” (Fig. 12.16) The Atmosfär bedroom suggests a transition between ideals. While the impression of the relaxed family in their comfortable bed landscape strongly suggests leisure, the catalog still justified the setting as a practical reminder that the bases of Atmosfär makes the bedroom easy to clean.\textsuperscript{54} The catalog thereby followed a familiar rational theme. Further, Hassbjer had studied Swedish housing standards thoroughly in order to adjust the measurements of the modules to fit all sizes of bedrooms and to facilitate storage to get the most out of the bedroom space.\textsuperscript{55}

This time, the bedroom featured the entire family. The little girl has created her own space between her parents’ beds, with stools covered in foam rubber cushions, giving her “a good place on Sunday morning,” according to the catalog. Father is in bed in his pajamas reading the evening paper, teacup in hand. Mother sits on top of the bed, resting against specially designed back and neck pillows. The bedroom has been transformed into a large area for relaxation, though this configuration can be changed easily into separate beds. Another image reveals conveniences in the rest of the room, with a wall-

\textsuperscript{53} Bra bohag, \textit{Bra bohag 1965/66}, cover, 4-5. Swedish text: “Drömsovrum”.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 53. Swedish text: “lått planera en behovsriktig förvaring”
mounted hair dryer, a small television set (at a time when it was unusual to have multiple TVs), and a dressing table.

By the late 1960s, Hassbjer’s modular thinking in the bedroom had spread. For the 1968 Ikea catalog, Gillis Lundgren had created Las Vegas, “refreshing, young furnishing” with beds fit into a wall-mounted panel that could be combined with modules such as a dressing table, which was typically available with white lacquer or in oak.⁵⁶ (Fig. 12.17) Although not as elaborate as Bra bohag’s Atmosfär, it differed from Ikea’s traditionally furnished bedroom interiors.

In spite of the modernity of Las Vegas, as in the case of Atmosfär, the key argument was firmly rooted in the practical rhetoric of rational housekeeping: “20 fewer legs to clean around, better space, greater comfort.”⁵⁷ By 1970, also the Co-op featured beds in a wall arrangement with matching green fabric surrounded by pine shelves and cabinets in the series Louisiana, where a woman reading in the adjustable bed expresses comfort and relaxation.⁵⁸ (Fig. 12.18)

Suggesting the bedroom as a “place for living, not just for sleeping,” bed producers followed suit. With ads for “the complete bedroom suite created for an active room,” the company Paradis proposed reading, watching television, listening to music or the radio, ⁵⁶–⁷. Swedish text: “Praktiskt taget varje smakriktning skall här kunna tillgodoses.” KF Interiör, Nytt hem 1969–70, 4, featuring a double bed in a white interior with orange accents, “restful and stimulating.” Swedish text. “Vilsamt och stimulerande.”

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⁵⁷ Ibid., 163, 165. Swedish text: “20 ben mindre att städa omkring, bättre utrymme, större komfort”.
⁵⁸ KF Interiör, Nytt hem Hösten/vintern 1970, 4. They had featured traditional twin bed arrangements and double beds before: KF Interiör, Nytt hem 1967-68, 16, 18, practically stating: “Two beds placed together give the intimacy of the double bed but are more practical.” Swedish text: “Två hopställda sängar ger dubbelbäddens intimitet men är mer praktiskt.” KF Interiör, Nytt hem 1968-69, starting the catalog with bedrooms targeting almost “every type of taste,” now including a double bed 200 x 160 cm and drawings of the spring mattress interiors, suggesting the bedroom as a room for rest or activity, 5-7. Swedish text: “Praktiskt taget varje smakriktning skall här kunna tillgodoses.” KF Interiör, Nytt hem 1969-70, 4, featuring a double bed in a white interior with orange accents, “restful and stimulating.” Swedish text. “Vilsamt och stimulerande.”
and “perhaps working a little.” Their bed system included built-in lighting, a dressing table, and serving trays in jacaranda-colored beech.\(^{59}\) By 1970, Ikea also wanted to “activate” the bedroom through a soothing dark blue interior, with comfortable cushions for reading or handicraft. White-lacquered *Pop 68* shelves with a TV set, telephone, radio, drinks on a brass tray, books, candles, and various ornaments made “the bedroom something more than just a bedroom—a place to hang out both day and night. Here one watches television, relaxes, and rests.”\(^{60}\) Nothing is mentioned about cleaning.

**Making the Bedroom a Place for Love**

Intimacy also went unmentioned until Fredriksson, editor-in-chief of *Allt i Hemmet*, spelled it out on the cover in 1970: “Room for love.”\(^{61}\) While Lena Larsson had promoted the “active” bedroom to watch TV, read, and relax in, she spoke more than others of welcoming in children and questioned traditional twin-bed arrangements, where two beds

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\(^{60}\) *Ikea, Katalog 1970*, 155. Swedish text: “aktivera . . . Med ens är sovrummet något mer än ett sovrum – här kan man hålla till på både dagar och kvällar. Här ser man på TV, kopplar av och vilar ut.” The same idea of a bedroom as a room for day and night was featured on page 149.

were placed perpendicular to the wall. Fredriksson, on the other hand, acknowledged that the magazine “had presented many comfortable bedrooms. But it was not really books and radio programs we thought of when we once bought our first beds. We thought that finally love would have its place, all the time.” Her straightforward approach to bedroom furnishing suited the time, and as a backdrop for the article, she used the Swedish sex education film Language of Love, which had attracted significant audiences to movie theaters in 1969. Nude couples were even featured in a few bedroom advertisements.

Interviewing men and women about the significance of the bedroom for sexual activity, Fredriksson concluded that they had different demands. While many men wanted something more than just a bed, to reduce the pressure and make it easier to be intimate, many women liked the bedroom as a space to crawl into and withdraw. One of the three featured interiors tried to meet these demands, resembling some of the activity-based bedrooms seen in the furniture catalogs and advertisements: “Here one drinks tea, reads, talks, play records—while also suggesting a cave, with a vast canopy to crawl in under.” (Fig. 12.21) It was Maija Isola’s Marimekko fabric Joonas that formed the

64 “Tillsammans är ett vackert ord Paradis” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 13, no. 3 (1968); “Om ni köper gardinen med det invävda blybandet Gardisette” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 14, no. 11 (1969): 108-09. Nudity, unrelated to love or sex, was common in many sauna advertisements in the late 1960s; they often featured the whole family.
canopy over the double bed, as well as sheets and pillowcases, spreading a warm yellow and orange atmosphere in the room and supported by quilts, walls, and a rya rug in the same color scheme. Ikea’s curvy bentwood rocking chair Trinidad in black was used for contrast.

While typically conventional, Bra bohag took the lead in developing the ideal bedroom as a multipurpose room similar to Allt i Hemmet’s 1964 vision. The relaxed, snug atmosphere of the bedrooms featured in Allt i Hemmet and the Bra bohag, Co-op, and Ikea catalogs differed from private ideal bedrooms of the 1950s and early 1960s. There was less emphasis on a sewing machine placed on the same practical work table as the dressing table, and the focus was no longer on the health benefits of high-quality beds or clearance for easy cleaning. The long-pile carpets were neither the most hygienic nor easily vacuumed, and particleboard had abolished furniture with legs.

In this depiction, one was allowed to be lazy and enjoy the bedroom. The rational consumer was turning into a new character, not a waster, but someone who dared to acknowledge other needs, such as pleasure and emotional retreat over pure practicality and long-lasting quality.

krypa in under.” Further promoting new fabrics printed in bold colors, another interior featured the fabric Molnet by Gunilla Axén, but the designer names were not mentioned. Covering the whole wall from which twin beds could be pulled out, with white-lacquered bookshelves on the sides, the arrangement corresponded to one of the bedroom suites with panelling typical of the time. While Molnet cost 5.50 kronor per meter, Marimekko’s design was exclusive, costing 29 kronor per meter. Ibid., 22-23, 84, 86.
Chapter Thirteen

A Rustic Air of Pine in the Kitchen, Simplification, and Changeability

In the second half of the 1960s, just as women were entering the labor market in historic numbers, the ideal kitchen developed into a carefully designed space for an increasingly informal life. The growing consumer society drove kitchen furnishing and appliance markets to collaborate on products that played on desire and status rather than rational planning. The vernacular ideal, however, remained a vital force for design in Allt i Hemmet and the Co-op and Ikea catalogs. I consider these changes and their impact on Swedish consumer society in this chapter.

Rustic Pine for Informal Dining in the Kitchen

The new, larger kitchens featured in the 1964 God bostad encouraged informal dining and socializing in the kitchen, something further explored by Allt i Hemmet, the Co-op, and Ikea. In line with the liberation of the living room for other activities, a typical feature of Allt i Hemmet in 1968 was a 10-page article promoting the pleasure of dining in the kitchen over having two places for meals: “Shall we now finally go for a single eating place instead of the old two, i.e., the simple little one in the kitchen (that is used the most) and the fine one (for occasional holidays and guests some time)? There’s a

1 Bra bohag, on their hand, continued highlighting Malmsten’s Herrgården and dining in the living/dining room; as in earlier Bra bohag features, pine furniture was notably absent.
lot to be said for this arrangement!” Setting the tone for this feature, the first interior was described as “rustic” and inspired by unpretentious tavern restaurants. Light pine paneling completely covered the walls, along with, wine bottles, vernacular ceramics in the pine shelf, and brown stoneware plates on the table. (Fig. 13.1) Green-painted wooden armchairs with green, checkered cotton cushions, and a green metal lamp and tablecloth supported the rustic atmosphere, as did the baguettes rolled in red-and-white checkered napkins along with some cheese and sausage ready to cut.3

Similarly, the Co-op advertised their rustic dining area as a “place to gather and socialize, unpretentiously but cordially.” (Fig. 13.2) Here, a couple stands next to a similar backdrop of pine shelves and rustic red-painted pine chairs with straw seats and a red metal lamp over the wooden folding table (called Taverna); the floor is covered with seagrass mats to add to the natural and deliberately plain decor.4 While the name Taverna reflected the taste of simple Greek restaurants—recognizable to any who had ventured to the eastern Mediterranean on charter trips—the white, red, and blue runner Festremsa recalled an everyday handicraft tradition. Building on a peasant tradition, the red ladderback chair with straw seat resembled design projects on the continent using archetypal, vernacular models.5

3 Ibid., 52-53. Swedish text: “rustikt.” This interior was also on the cover.
5 Hedqvist, 1900-2002: Svensk form, 128-29. She exemplifies with Vico Magistretti’s red chair with straw seat 892 for Cassina (1962) and Timo Sarpaneva’s red pot with a wooden handle for Rosenlew & Co.
The vernacular ideal remained a vital force for design in *Allt i Hemmet* and the Co-op and Ikea catalogs, which continued to reference the Larsson home in Sundborn. In 1968, the magazine exclaimed: “Swedish blondness and a Carl Larsson atmosphere with secure tradition in the back! Isn’t it beautiful and friendly with a feel for nature and fine nuances in life!” The interior featured natural-colored stick-back armchairs of pine embellished with yellow cushions, a rustic pine table set under a yellow lamp, and simple pine shelves and cupboards against pale blue wallpaper. The Co-op followed the stick-back tradition in their blue and yellow dining area with white-lacquered stick-back couch and chairs. A handwoven rag rug on the floor resembled one seen in the Larsson house, contributing to what the catalog suggested was “the right, cozy atmosphere.”

Using stick-back chairs and couches continued an ideal that *Allt i Hemmet* and the advisory publications had championed in their promotion of the larger kitchen and the kitchen couch in the early 1960s. Following *Allt i Hemmet*’s articles on personalizing the standard kitchen, Ikea inspired customers to set up tomato-red chairs against yellow walls to create a “cozy, personal kitchen environment . . . in the midst of all stainless and tile, where you feel at home on weekdays and Sundays.” By 1968, the Ikea catalog included several colorful interiors and encouraged the readers to “add color to kitchen and dining

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6 Höfte, “Trevligt med matrum i köket,” 54. The furniture was *Furubo* from Swedese, but the magazine does not mention the designer Yngve Ekström. Swedish text: “Svensk blondhet och Carl Larsson-stämning med trygg tradition i ryggen! Visst är det vackert och vänligt med naturkänsla och fina nyanser i tillvaron!”


area!" (Fig. 13.4) Sundborn contributed the ideal picture, with red stick-back chairs against a green wall, while traditional stick-back couches, painted in blue or white, were featured with names suggesting the province of Dalarna, such as Dalom. In this way, Ikea spread images resembling Allt i Hemmet and the Co-op to promote informal socializing around the kitchen table, associating such activity with the vernacular and traditional.\(^9\)

With colorful details such as red or green chairs, a rustic air of pine and particleboard pervades most of Allt i Hemmet’s 1968 feature on dining areas. (Fig. 13.5) The first four interiors have unpainted pine panels on the walls or pine furniture, just as Ikea and others suggested. The fifth interior includes Co-op’s particleboard table and Spika shelves. Toward the end (and to cover other styles and materials), the magazine included an Art Nouveau–inspired interior and a cheap interior with white plastic Pop chairs and a plastic table against walls covered in foil wallpaper. On the tenth page, the last interior included Bruno Mathsson’s super ellipse table in white, red Ant chairs by Arne Jacobsen, a matching red PH lamp (also from Denmark), and bold fabric with red pattern by Sven Fristedt.\(^10\)

As in other features in Allt i Hemmet, contemporary design came at the end and served as a contrast to the main focus of the feature, in this case the rustic dining areas in pine. In this way, the magazine dutifully included contemporary design while still highlighting the relevance of the rustic and vernacular, as Ikea and the Co-op had done.

\(^10\) Ibid., 132-33, 252-59.
\(^11\) Höste, “Trevligt med matrum i köket,” 58-61. For Allt i Hemmet at the time, all designer names were not important as Arne Jacobsen and Poul Henningsen were not mentioned. For more on printed fabrics, see Sara Axtelius, *Tyger vi minns från 1960- och 70-talen* (Bromma: Ordalaget Bokförlag, 2017).
A New Kitchen Standard

*Allt i Hemmet* continued arguing that the kitchen space should allow family members to work together side by side. Although the dining area had grown in the 1964 *God bostad*, the kitchen still only accommodated one person at a time. The magazine maintained its role as a voice in the public debate and collaborated with Alice Thiberg, an architect who furthered the development of the standard kitchen in the 1960s and 1970s through her work at the Consumer Institute. In 1966, *Allt i Hemmet* asked her to design a model kitchen for a family of four. Engaging a leading expert in the field was another sign of the magazine’s credibility and serious dedication to consumer guidance.

In her 1966 editorial, Birgitta Ek explained the magazine’s mission to liberate women from the burden of household work: “We wanted our kitchen to inspire another type of family than the one who can’t see beyond home baking and grandmother’s stuffed cabbage rolls.” Work in the kitchen should not take more than an hour a day and could be shared: “With a rational workplace where many have room to help out, one manages fine.” The magazine announced that Thiberg’s kitchen was not a small laboratory, but rather a kitchen with generous counter space; modern equipment such as a dishwasher, refrigerator and freezer; and a good deal of storage space that allowed for the new types

13 Birgitta Ek, “Vad begär vi av köket?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 11, no. 10 (1966): 3. Swedish text: “Vi ville med vårt kök ge impulser till en annan typ av familj än den som sitter fast i ambitioner om hembakat och mormors käldolmar. . . . Har man en rationell arbetsplats där många har plats att hjälpa till klarar man det fint.” Ek also describes the most important kitchen revolution since the countryside kitchen, that almost 100 percent of apartments and more than 70 percent of countryside homes now have water and drainage in their kitchens, which indicates how quickly Sweden had modernized by the 1960s; still, the country as a whole had a long way to go, especially in rural areas.
of appliances, groceries, and packaging. Even with its footprint of 9.5 square meters, this design suited standard plans and could be connected to a dining area or other parts of the dwelling.\(^{14}\)

The following year, Thiberg and her colleagues at the Consumer Institute recognized that it was time to revise the standard kitchen. Based on research conducted in the 1940s, it had been presented in 1950, with some changes in the early 1960s. Thiberg’s group tested different solutions in full-scale models built at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH). Their model household included four to six people, with the assumption that eight people should have room to sit and eat in the dining area, as the 1964 *God bostad* had suggested. Their innovative design allowed for two people to work in the kitchen at the same time.\(^{15}\) (Fig. 13.6)

Since the 1940s, the kitchen standard was always seen as a series of building blocks that could be combined in different ways to create a practical environment. In this way, standardization guaranteed variability, Thiberg stressed, although she noticed that it was “an effect that has received too little attention.” The new standard for 1970 included greater flexibility, such as movable shelves, trays, bases, and cupboards were now shown as separate units, with built-in zones for wires and pipes to increase the placement


\(^{15}\) Alice Thiberg, “Standard för valfrihet,” *Form* 69, no. 648 (4-5/1973): 154-58. Statens institut för byggnadsforskning, the National Institute for Building Research, also participated in the development of a new standard. The aim was to develop units for the kitchen interior with coordinated measurements and cabinets that were flexible and exchangeable. To rationalize production and lower cost, they would be built as much as possible of the same components—cupboard doors, sides, bases, shelves, trays; this would give flexibility to the user, as shelves and trays were moveable and bases and ceiling fittings were loose, allowing for different heights. Ibid., 154. See also Elsässer, *Att skapa en konsument*, 141-44. The 1964 *God bostad* required larger apartments to accommodate eight people, see chapter seven.
options. A controversial decision, according to Thiberg, was the addition of cabinets that did not go up all the way to the ceiling, as the previous standard had dictated; the new standard allowed for an option of 210 cm, the so-called “continental height.” Many experts considered these new dimensions a fad that decreased storage space while creating problems for cleaning the top of the cabinets, which collected dust and were hard to reach. The advantage, Thiberg felt, was flexibility of height and a lighter impression that might be useful if one wanted to integrate the kitchen with other areas of the dwelling.

Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachman claim that “the modern kitchen embodies the ideology of the culture to which it belongs.” During the 1960s, Allt i Hemmet and the home economics curricula, for example, had promoted incorporating the whole family in household work. In the new kitchen standard, the Consumer Institute dropped the earlier

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16 Thiberg, “Standard för valfrihet,” 154-55. Swedish text: “en alltför lite uppmärksammad effekt.” While standardized measurements were important in the first standard kitchen of 1950, they were slightly simplified by 1970. In the 1954 God bostad, cupboards above the sink are 1 meter wide, while in 1970 all cupboards were 40 or 60 cm wide along with a narrow space of 20 cm that allowed for trays or towels. The standard depths were the same, 60 cm for lower cupboards and a tall cupboard, such as for cleaning equipment, and 30 cm for upper cupboards. The normal height for benches was 90 cm, a dimension introduced in 1961; see chapter seven. In addition to the standard measurements, standard quality was also introduced, including requirements for the carrying capacity of shelves, material, movability, drawer durability, and stability; countertops would be laminated with plastic or a minimum of 2 mm veneer of teak or other hardwood. Thiberg further mentions the discussion on kitchens for people in wheelchairs and points out that the flexibility of the new standard guarantees the necessary variability in such cases. Ibid., 154-58. See also Alice Thiberg, Planuniformning av kök: Förslag till intredningsmått och plantyper (Stockholm: Byggforsknings, 1968); Gun Hallberg and Alice Thiberg, “Respect basic requirements,” in Housing Research and Design in Sweden, ed. Sven Thiberg (Stockholm: Swedish Council for Building Research, 1990), 173-79; Statens institut för konsumentfrågor, Kök: Planering, inredning, 5th ed., rev. (Stockholm: Statens institut för konsumentfrågor, 1972).

17 Ibid., 154-55, 159. Swedish text: “kontinentalhöjd.” It was also referred to as “the German ‘continental height.’” Wickman, “Hemmet,” 221.

one-person kitchen calculation in favor of a space that allowed for two people to cook—a concrete step toward gender equality.

**Package Kitchens to Address Status and Desire**

While the state provided the standard measurements and functions of a kitchen, the market began competing through the promotion of open-plan kitchen and living spaces; kitchen furnishing manufacturers collaborated with producers of electrical appliances to market package deals. In a first, the producers exhibited 19 “package kitchens” in 1970. Upon review of these offerings, *Allt i Hemmet* wondered if better options could have been created had real design experts been employed. Most important for the magazine’s jury were the key features stipulated for the Swedish standard kitchen, which created a logical workflow, allowed for a space on both sides of the stove where items could be placed, and provided at least 80 cm between the water supply and the stove. As proof of how the kitchen standard had influenced the producers, most of the package kitchens lived up to these expectations, but there were details that the magazine felt could have been better solved in almost every kitchen.

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19 Birgitta Ek, “Är det bra med paketkök?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 9 (1970): 106-114. The article was based on a kitchen exhibition in Stockholm, where the industry displayed 19 package kitchens with white goods, cabinets, and counters from eleven different companies. As always, the magazine was thorough in its investigation and had asked a jury of architects and other experts to examine the exhibited kitchens. Previously, the magazine had performed limited investigations of such kitchens, concluding that consumers would have gotten better kitchens based on the ordinary Swedish standards. Birgitta Ek and Alice Thiberg, “Dyrt? Javisst! Men....,” *Allt i Hemmet* 12, no. 3 (1967): 38-41. In another article, they tested Danish Børge Mogensen’s Öresund kitchen of Oregon pine, with the criticism that such a package could become like the parlor: forbidden to children, costing three times as much as an ordinary standard kitchen, with measurements that did not fit those of current housing construction in Sweden. Birgitta Ek and Alice Thiberg, “Ska vi ha så här vackra kök?,” *Allt i Hemmet* 12, no. 5 (1967): 48-51.

20 Ek, “Är det bra med paketkök?,” 106-07. The jury questioned the idea of separating the oven and hobs:
The magazine liked the Husqvarna kitchen best: “warm and cozy, spacious, and generous—beautiful as well.”21 Appearing to have followed the kitchen debate since the 1950s, the company’s 1970 advertisement suggested that the kitchen grew together with the living room into an all-room, repeating the ways that Allt i Hemmet had promoted the family kitchen. While the state had only vaguely mentioned such an idea for the future, it was the market that began promoting it as “a nice thought that is no longer a mere fantasy—today it is reality.”22 (Fig. 13.7) The color palette was also changing. The typically white features (traditionally the stove, oven, or refrigerator) were no longer only white, and Husqvarna claimed that they were the only company providing a complete, although the oven was placed at a convenient height, ventilation was needed in two places—and where would the baking plates be placed? Many kitchens had the sink set into the countertop instead of the traditional long stainless steel sink, which many people thought gave a sterile impression, according to the magazine. The new system, however, created problematic joints and without a drip-edge, water ran down the cupboard doors and onto the floor. Ibid., 107. The inserted sink was a continental idea, as there was a lack of stainless steel there, whereas in Sweden it represented status, as Kerstin Wickman points out when she questions the colony of bacteria and the slowly rotating wood by the joint of the inserted sink. Kerstin Wickman, “Överstandard,” Form 69, no. 648 (4-5/1973): 162. 21 Ek, “Är det bra med paketkök?, 107. Swedish text: “Varmt och hemtrevligt, inventiöst och generöst – vackert också”. 22 “Husqvarna” advertisement, Allt i Hemmet 15, no. 9 (1970): 68-69. On a smaller image in the advertisement, there was a Husqvarna kitchen with dark green instead of blue, giving a less fancy impression. Swedish text: “Det är en skön tanke som inte längre är exklusiv fantasi—den är verklighet idag.” See chapter seven on the role of television in changing the kitchen and the living room. Around 2000, after deregulation, the open-plan kitchen and living spaces became increasingly common in Swedish apartments. Maja Willén, Berättelser om den öppna planlösningens arkitektur: En studie av bostäder, boende och livsstil i det tidiga 2000-talets Sverige, Ph.D. diss. (Lund: Sekel Bokförlag, 2012). Willén analyzes contemporary dream kitchens promoted in interior design magazines and catalogs, where the social function is the most important. Maja Willén, “Drömkök till salu: Förståelser om kökets historia på marknaden,” in Köket: Rum för drömmar: ideal och vardagsliv under det långa 1900-talet, Nordiska museets handlingar 143, ed. Ulrika Torell, Jenny Lee, and Roger Qvarsell (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2018), 300-21. For a discussion of lifestyle kitchens in Denmark, see Hans-Christian Jensen, “Livsstilskokkenet – ’Alle har ret til et fedt koksken,” in Design: Kokkenet, ed. Lars Dybdahl and Ida Engholm (Copenhagen: Bruun Rasmussen Publishers, 2008), 131-45; “Jacob Jensen and the Lifa Kitchen: Branding the ‘Lifestyle Kitchen’ with Designer Personality and Mythology,” in Scandinavian Design: Alternative Histories, ed. Kjetil Fallan (London and New York: Berg, 2012), 152-67.
color-coordinated kitchen, described as a whole “environment,” miljökök. The two-page image shows dark blue oven, refrigerator, freezer, and tile, with veneered cabinets of dark wood, a counter-like “island” in the middle with sink, stove, and a microwave oven, which was extremely unusual in Sweden at the time. The newspaper on the countertop was The Times, adding to the kitchen’s glamorous flair, which broke with the utilitarian look of a Swedish standard kitchen.

In comparison to the colorful, painted kitchens of the 1950s depicted in Allt i Hemmet, the package kitchens resembled living rooms, with wooden countertops and wooden cabinets that did not reach the ceiling. Allt i Hemmet’s jury repeated the critique of similarly packaged solutions of furniture groups and shelving systems for the living room: “A bit sterile and boring,” almost all appearing the same with their high-grade wood veneer. Consequently, the joy of renewing the kitchen with paint was lost among the new package kitchens, according to the jury. As a complete contrast to such kitchens, Allt i Hemmet presented three colorful standard kitchens in the same issue. A team of interior designers had renewed them with paint, in one case adding stainless steel. Like Allt i Hemmet, Ikea promoted its unpainted Pax kitchen as “new, money-

23 “Husqvarna” advertisement, 68-69. “Environment” (miljö) was the “in” word of the time, as Kerstin Wickman points out, exemplifying with Ikea, which called their store south of Stockholm miljövaruhus as they were thinking in terms of the whole room and displayed completely furnished rooms in the store. Wickman, “Hemmet,” 220.
25 Ek, “Allt i Hennets specialsektion om kök,” 99-105, 98. The readers were also invited to vote on which kitchen they liked the best. Designs included those by Rosa Horowitz—splashed paint; Malmsten—pine table and blue-painted stick-back chairs; Birgitta Sundquist—dark-green cupboards, red floor and interiors of cupboards, some of which did not have doors, and cheap, white plastic chairs; and Stephan Gip—black and white with stainless steel also on the floor, countertops, and table along with black office chairs, door handles from hospital, and big red letters as a decoration and information on the refrigerator and freezer.
saving possibilities for people ready to ‘do-it-yourself.’” The catalog further highlighted the mountability of Pax, claiming that the consumer only needed a hammer and Ikea’s hexagonal wrench, which was included.26

While Husqvarna did not say a word about the rational or practical nature of their designs in their kitchen ad, Ikea continued its typical rhetoric, promoting the kitchen series Pax as a “rational and convenient kitchen . . . in principle following the Swedish standard.”27 Ikea became the greatest disseminator of the idea of the Swedish standard kitchen. Continuing their reliance on state agencies and consumer guidance, the company changed the arrangements of kitchens depicted in catalogs and stores after Thiberg’s criticism of them in the early 1970s.28 In comparison to other companies marketing package kitchens, Ikea was an exception. Their idea of self-service and ready-to-assemble furniture, including kitchens, suited the do-it-yourself spirit of the time and contributed to Ikea’s success, which also built on the company’s consumer guidance.

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27 Ikea, *Katalog 1968*, 249-50. Furthermore, Pax was “produced by a well-known Swedish factory.” Swedish text: “Pax tillverkas av en välkänd svensk fabrik. Enheterna är i princip gjorda i enlighet med svensk standard. . . . ett rationellt och bekvämt kök”.

approach. The companies selling package deals, on the other hand, represented a new consumer culture that prized status and desire over rationality.

‘Just Add an Egg’ and other Changes in Kitchen Culture

Since 1960, *Allt i Hemmet* had encouraged women to work and earn their own money as part of their encouragement to let go of old traditions. In 1968, under the heading “Mother’s work always pays off!” Ek featured a thorough calculation and further argued for separate taxation of spouses, another example of how *Allt i Hemmet* voiced its concern in current debates. No husband, she stated, should claim that the income tax was getting too high just because his wife’s salary was combined with his own. In 1971, the Swedish parliament reformed the tax law, thereby officially signaling that women should enter the labor force. Separate taxation became one of the key reforms for gender equality in Sweden. In the same 1968 article, Ek asked when daycare centers would become a right available to families as schools were, in an effort to help relieve the plight of working families.29

Apart from the economic benefits that a woman received from having a job, the magazine encouraged simplification of the household work by using more industrially produced food, such as canned goods and frozen foods. Regardless of whether the woman undertook paid work or stayed at home, the magazine wanted to challenge the presumption that it was economical and necessary to do things alone. Through a diagram, the magazine showed that one could save ten hours per month by using

semimanufactured articles, such as ready-made mashed potatoes, instead of preparing them from scratch. Taking consumer guidance seriously, the magazine had asked the Consumer Institute to make the calculations, and the result was the same regarding sewing and baking. It is hardly worthwhile to do such things yourself, they claimed.30  
Typical of the time in its compromise between the ideal of home baking and the availability of ready-made mixes, the Co-op advertised its sponge cake under the quote “I choose Juvel Wiener—quick baking where all one needs to add is an egg!”31 In fine print, the advertisement described how a Juvel product was also available as a mix that already included an egg, so you just needed to add water. Apparently, in spite of all the convenient new groceries designed to save time in the kitchen, the idea of adding an egg yourself symbolized the limit of how far many women felt that they could go in order to live up to their roles as good homemakers.

Additionally, new types of household goods meant to make life simpler arrived in the market at the end of the 1960s. The setting-up-home features of Allt i Hemmet spoke of colorful terry towels, bed linen that did not need finishing, and multipurpose glasses

that made special wine services unnecessary. The magazine continued promoting goods for both everyday and festive occasions, making a fine dinner service or silver cutlery obsolete.\textsuperscript{32} Still in 1969, the magazine argued the advantage of a plain white plate over a patterned one with food served on it.\textsuperscript{33}

A new feature in the promotion of a simplified life was the use of paper plates and paper napkins. Advertisements in \textit{Allt i Hemmet} promoted simple dinners with friends where you just serve shrimp and set the table with a paper tablecloth and napkins, rather than laying out linen cloths and napkins that require time-consuming washing and ironing.\textsuperscript{34} (This was before the 1973 oil crisis and the growing awareness of environmental degradation.) In the optimistic spirit of the time, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} even featured an article in which a family lived a whole month on disposable paper sheets, paper plates, and plastic cups to save them from boring household work.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{flushright}

\textsuperscript{33} Oljelund and Rejnholm, “ABC för Er som sätter bo,” no. 4 (1969): 40. In 1970, Oljelund had chosen 20 plates for everyday use and more festive occasions, where she still proclaimed the plain white plate as probably the best for everyday use, but for festive change she had picked plates with patterns, out of which several in dark blue were highlighted because they made “most kinds of food beautiful.” Oljelund, “Vi väljer tallrikar för vardag och fest,” 32-33.

\textsuperscript{34} Examples of such advertisements are: “Jag dukar gärna med Meny o Dixie” advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 11, no. 6 (1966): 104; “… och naturligtvis Duni även till vardags!” advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 11, no. 6 (1966): 106; “Räkfest för fyra Duni” advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 11, no. 8 (1966): 68; “Välkomna på ost och vin! Duni” advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 11, no. 11 (1966): 100; “Diskfri semester Meny o Dixie” advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 12, no. 5 (1967): 84; “Har ni sett vad trevligt! Duni” advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 13, no. 6 (1968): 64; “Lite festligare Tre Ess” advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 13, no. 11 (1968): 12-13; “Tänker Ni diska Er igenom den här sommaren också? advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 15, no. 6 (1970): 94; “En del gästbar har bara tandborsten med sig. Mölnlycke korttids-lakan” advertisement, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 15, no. 7 (1970): 2.

\textsuperscript{35} Birgitta Ek, “Att leva med papper,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 12, no. 7 (1967): 20-23, 64, 67.
Just as the market was changing from specialized furniture shops to large stores, the growing consumer society altered the availability of household goods. At the end of the 1960s, the new phenomenon of cooking shops appeared in Sweden, partly inspired by the Conran shop in the UK. Department stores created new sections where they sold a variety of inexpensive kitchen utensils, household goods, and other objects for the home. The furniture and setting-up-home shops had also developed into large department stores, like Ikea and the Co-op stores, replacing the small shops with their knowledgeable staff and fine-quality, traditional household goods. Allt i Hemmet reported on the new phenomenon in several articles, both regretting that the old specialized shops were disappearing and approving of the new informal lifestyle:

And it is quite nice that we no longer take furnishing and arranging our dwellings so seriously. We no longer dream of a furniture suite for life, a complete dinner service to start off the marriage, or handwoven damask tablecloths for the linen cupboard.

Now we dare to put up a striking poster on the wall and drink coffee out of colorful enamel mugs—as long as we think it’s fun. The tablecloth is not necessarily white—if we even have a tablecloth. We have become less bound to etiquette and think more of having a good time at home, even in an everyday setting. It is the young people who are leading the way, but even the older ones like us can cheer up a little worn-out home with a colorful Asian mobile slowly fluttering in the wind or a happy pop tray to serve the TV dinner on.

One only must find the new shops [where these items are sold].

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The quote captures the stark shift in advice literature about furnishing and living in a new dwelling. The tone has moved from educating the consumer about quality and carefully selecting what is really needed to mass consumption of goods in a manner never before seen in Sweden. At the same time, informality, a quality especially cherished by the younger generation, had also become widely accepted.

Addressing the Need for Comfort and Belonging

The Larsson home in Sundborn continued to inspire the editors of *Allt i Hemmet*, providing a vision of comfort at a time of rapid urbanization and new housing construction. At the start of the decade, most suburbs lacked the social services or cohesiveness required to forge a community—often because they were too new—and the magazine recognized how rootlessness and isolation grew in the sterile, tall buildings with hundreds of similar apartments. The 1970 feature “Carl Larsson—New Today” promoted Larsson-inspired interiors to cure the urgent need for belonging and bara att finna vägen till de nya butikerna.” The increasing availability of new goods in the market led *Allt i Hemmet* to start a new series where each month their experts examined new products launched at department stores like Domus (KF, the Co-op), Epa, NK, and Tempo, selecting items to present as “pretty, sensible, nice to have.” Höste and Oljelund, “Nytt & bra i varuhusen,” 48-53. The magazine also wondered how the old setting-up-home shops would survive when department stores along with furniture stores opened “shop departments” with all kinds of kitchen utensils, household goods, and presents such as vases at reasonable prices. “Möbelhandeln,” *Allt i Hemmet* 13, no. 11 (1968): 109. They also featured objects from the new cooking shops with French and English kitchen utensils, suitable both for one’s own kitchen and as gifts, according to the magazine. Astrid Rejnholm, “Yrkesmannens redskap finner vi i de nya köksbodarna,” *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 12 (1969): 40-43. Ikea did not feature household goods in the catalogs, but in the store at Kungens kurva south of Stockholm there was such a section, called Accenten. Wickman, “Hemmet,” 220. Hedvig Hedqvist further describes how the Co-op, Åhléns, Tempo, and Epa seek renewal through collaboration with young designers; it was noted that the Co-op had experience in this area stretching back to the 1930s when it came to furniture, while the others had historic connections with Finnish industry, thus giving a platform for new Finnish design. Hedqvist, 1900-2002: Svensk form, 141-43.

community. It was another critical contribution to the debate about the new suburbs’s anomie driven by *Allt i Hemmet* since the early 1960s.

During the Million Program, Sweden had set a world record for building the most per capita housing and led the way for increasing standards throughout Europe. By the late 1960s, however, a general debate criticizing the role of large-scale housing in society had begun. Most of the critique dealt with the appearance of the exterior and the social environment of the new developments. 38 *Allt i Hemmet*’s new Carl Larsson feature was just one in a series of articles where the magazine requested better service and encouraged community initiatives in the new suburbs. 39 In the meantime, the magazine saw how the Larsson home could instill a sense of security for the rootless inhabitants of


the new suburbs. Warning against a nostalgic longing for rag rugs over newly scrubbed wooden floors and a writing desk full of symmetrically arranged photographs and ornaments, the magazine reminded readers that such an interior was a false memory from a life they had never lived: it was their grandmother’s, and her life had entailed work and hardship.\footnote{Ek, “Carl Larsson – ny i dag,” 17-19.} Their features on summer cottages proved the most popular, though, and the magazine recognized the longing for community that such cottages represented. By navigating the fine line between urban modernity and traditional Swedish belonging, \textit{Allt i Hemmet} promoted Larsson-inspired interiors in the city.

The magazine’s use of the Larsson image once again had a dual purpose—to inspire the creation of a personal home for everyday life free from the preoccupation with status, and to convey a sense of comfort and security. New in the 1970 feature was a focus on the mixture of old and new, cheap and expensive, which Karin and Carl Larsson had also used in their rural house. The magazine translated interiors from Sundborn into an apartment environment using furniture from Ikea, the Co-op, and Carl Malmsten that had a “clear Larsson inspiration.” (Fig. 13.8) Following the unpretentiousness of Sundborn, the \textit{Spika} shelves made of particleboard were featured prominently in an adapted reading room.\footnote{Ibid., 14-21. Swedish text: “klar Larssoninspiration.” Another article on what to learn from the home of Karin and Carl Larsson: Lena Larsson, “Vad kan Sundborn lära oss i dag?,” \textit{Allt i Hemmet} 14, no. 3 (1969): 56-57.} Another point made by \textit{Allt i Hemmet} through the Larsson home was its flexibility, shown in the artist’s watercolor illustrations: “[the] cheap stick-back couch is exchanged for something more comfortable, the table gets larger, the studio next to the
drawing room turns into an all-room with carpentry bench, loom, and sewing machine—long before the era of the all-room.” All this aligned with the changing needs of the growing family, for “the home was never finished.”\textsuperscript{42} With increasing prosperity and availability of goods, in the 1960s and 1970s more consumer choices made the home a constantly changing project rather than a stable centerpoint around which the family’s lives revolved.

An August 1970 editorial spoke of the possibility of choosing between “cheap stuff that doesn’t require care and respect” and the expensive, “timeless beautiful things.” Yet, the key message was the advantage of variety that a cheap interior offered. The editorial summarized the whole period of the 1960s: “Before, not too long ago, the prestige word was always quality. Do you remember? Today it is also changeability.”\textsuperscript{43} The emerging ideal emphasized a preference for a personal space that mixed old and new, cheap and expensive.


Conclusion

This dissertation examined the 1950s and 1960s, the heyday of the Swedish welfare state and the rise of mass consumption. Until the 1920s, the detached house had been the domestic ideal, for politicians thought that housing people in individual dwellings with their own garden would limit revolution or emigration to America. During the period of Social Democratic control, from 1932, parliament agreed that the apartment provided a standard that could ameliorate poor housing conditions; this ideal, and the related effort to modernize construction, reached its peak by 1970. In the span of a few decades—from the early 1930s to the 1960s—Sweden’s housing standards rose from among the lowest levels in Europe to some of the highest in the world. By 1970, construction of residential dwellings in Sweden was the greatest in the world in proportion to population.

The contribution of this dissertation is to reevaluate the interaction and interplay between the state, commercial, and consumer-cooperative actors to create and promote a discourse of the ideal home in Sweden. This interaction provided the fertile ground in which Ikea could grow and set the stage for the future development of a politics of gender equality. Further, the interplay of public and private spheres found a material expression in a rural ideal at a time of urbanization, visible only through consideration of the popular press and commercial furniture catalogs of the period. In this way, this dissertation is a contribution to a history of Swedish consumption and an alternative history of Scandinavian design, which traditionally has privileged mid-century modern and the work of celebrated architects.
The social and economic shifts of the 1950s and 1960s crystallize in the advice literature and commercial publications that arose at the same time. By focusing on that period, this dissertation explores the changing values and visions of apartment living and promotion of consumption in Sweden from 1950 to 1970.

**Research and Rational Consumption**

It should not surprise us that the Co-op disseminated an official ideal of home and related consumption in Social Democratic Sweden. Commercial actors such as Ikea and *Allt i Hemmet*, however, also took up this model, demonstrating how the unusual consumption culture of postwar Sweden could assume public, private, and cooperative forms. This dissertation enlarges the notion of a specific Social Democratic consumption regime of postwar Sweden, which historian of technology Mikael Hárd has introduced in contrast to Victoria de Grazia’s Fordist consumption regime. By looking at the ways Swedes studied and outfitted the domestic environment, I have contributed to a broader understanding of models of consumption and the powerful role of emulation and advice.

Starting with the 1950s and first half of the 1960s, I suggested that the scientific research and active involvement by organizations, state authorities, and commercial actors created and disseminated a vision of an ideal home in the form of rationally planned and scientifically researched kitchens and home furnishings. After decades of careful research, the rational and efficient principles of the Swedish standard kitchen appeared for the first time in 1950. Standardized, combinable units were presented as official norms in *God bostad* and through state-supported institutions such as the Home Research Institute (Hemmens forskningsinstitut, HFI). As I have shown, commercial
actors such as *Allt i Hemmet* and *Ikea* served to promote the standard kitchen and its accompanying model of efficient labor to a broad audience. This type of research was also applied to other parts of the dwelling. Illustrating the eagerness to research functionality and find standardized solutions, furniture investigations were equally serious and scientific and resulted in standard measurements of beds and other furniture. The housing board, on their side, facilitated standard ways of placing furniture in the apartment through measurements indicated in *God bostad*.

Consumer guidance was increasingly prominent in the 1960s, a period when the baby boom generation began to marry and set up home in these new modern apartments. Commercial as well as cooperative actors encouraged young couples to grab the tape measure, plan their home, and become educated consumers. The research published in *God bostad* and other official publications found its missionaries in *Allt i Hemmet*, the *Ikea* and Bra bohag catalogs, as well as advice literature by the Co-op, often using the same images and even the same wording as the state agencies. In this way, my method of discourse analysis of both the text and images of these popular sources has demonstrated how official research was widely spread and popularized. Commercial and consumer-cooperative publications, along with the official setting-up-home brochure, all provided the similar advice and arguments from state agencies as the housing board in fostering an ideal of thrift and reason in the 1950s and early 1960s in Sweden. Yet these popular publications were not merely megaphones for the government standards. In some cases, they encouraged individuality and encouraged rejection of formal standards of living. My work shows the importance of popular media and commercial companies as mediators bridging the gap between state policy and the general public in Sweden.
Toward Larger Kitchens

While some historians have used social engineering as a means of viewing this critical period, this study shares with researchers, such as Mikael Hård, Peder Aléx, Maria Göransdotter, and Britta Lövgren, an emphasis on the collaboration between public, private, and cooperative actors to create and promote a discourse regarding the ideal home in Sweden. Even the official standards were the result of a long process of collaborative study.

The highly regularized Swedish standard kitchen and norms of God bostad might give the impression of offering a decree from above—that is, from the state—for every builder and producer to follow. But rather than representing a kind of social engineering, the standards were the result of collective effort and research by the building industry, architects, women’s organizations, and other actors such as Allt i Hemmet in corporatist Sweden. As I have shown, the housing board did not drive the development of all-round use of the living room or a larger kitchen, but instead used housing investigations and lived experience to adjust the building norms to reflect how people inhabited their living spaces. After the advent of television, the 1964 God bostad understood that the living room had become an evening room and not a place where children could play. For example, the housing board shifted its terms. No longer suggesting that the living room “shall be” the central gathering place for the family (as they had in the past), only that it “might be.”

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In contrast, it was *Allt i Hemmet*, the Co-op, Sweden’s central bank (Riksbanken) and the Swedish Society of Crafts and Design (Svenska slöjdföreningen) in their official setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning* that pushed the argument for children’s right for space at home, thereby caring for the future generation in the people’s home. The ideal family room drew design inspiration from a vernacular tradition of stick-back chairs, and the production of crafts alongside the ideals current in the United States in placing the play area at the center of the dwelling. For *Allt i Hemmet*, the ideal family room could be a large kitchen.

After persistent pressure by *Allt i Hemmet*, along with housing investigations and architects experimenting with apartment plans, the 1964 *God bostad* also acknowledged that a bigger kitchen should be a norm. Agreeing with *Allt i Hemmet* and the Co-op, the housing board itself even encouraged a more casual lifestyle with dining in the kitchen, in contrast to the formal “Sunday dinner” in the living room included in the 1960 *God bostad*. Furthermore, by enlarging the kitchen, the housing board gave space for other activities while the living room was occupied for watching television.

**A Rural Ideal at a Time of Urbanization**

While other historians have described the longing for a rural past in the 1970s, expressed in home furnishings such as pine furniture and printed fabrics, I have argued that *Allt i Hemmet* and Ikea were driving forces in establishing and mediating this ideal in the 1950s and 1960s. This dissertation demonstrates how an ideal rooted both in vernacular culture and in the artist home of Karin and Carl Larsson emerged in relation to Sweden’s late urbanization and the rootless experience of moving to the new suburbs. By
exploring sources such as a popular interior design magazine and commercial furniture catalogs, rather than professional design journals and milestone exhibitions, my method of analyzing the collaborative popular conversation has revealed how the discourse reached the general public and shifted in its popular expressions. Therefore, this study provides an alternative design history that focuses on how designed interiors were the result of a process of both official dictates and popular enthusiasm.

The ideal of rational consumption of “timeless quality” found an expression in the rural manor house culture of the eighteenth century. Allt i Hemmet and the Ikea catalog show a renewed understanding of the place of historicism in one of the most modernist expressions of the postwar age. The Gustavian style, admired by heritage and conserved by museum experts, also appealed to ordinary people dreaming of a Gustavian dining set from Ikea or an updated version by Carl Malmsten, fulfilling the ideal of timeless quality in the early 1960s. Ironically, modernism had already contributed to the Gustavian style as a model, a triumph of a specific Swedish simplicity, which made it compatible with ideals of rational function, standardization, and national self-image. For Allt i Hemmet, Malmsten furniture and the home of Karin and Carl Larsson were evidence in the magazine’s argument for personalizing the home, particularly the modern apartment with its rectangular living rooms and standard measurements furnished in the same way. The combination of practicality suited the Swedish official context of rational household work and functional furniture, and personal arrangements. The magazine stressed how the turn-of-the-century artistic couple combined traditional furniture and bold colors with a friendly atmosphere where both children and adults were welcome. Allt i Hemmet followed Ellen Key, who in her Beauty for All admired not the style per se but the attitude
of the Larssons, especially their ability to care for needs in view of their economic, technical, and material resources. Other expressions of a lost peasant culture are apparent in Allt i Hemmet readers’ “dream room” where Malmsten won over his modern contemporaries Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobsen, and Eero Saarinen.

The sophisticated rusticity evoking a cozy rural and manor house ideal filled a need at a time of change in the 1960s, reflected in Allt i Hemmet’s discussion of the discontented sense of rootlessness felt by the new inhabitants of the suburbs in the early 1960s. The dream of traditional, vernacular charm was something that Ikea adopted early in its promotion of pine in the living room, as well as the new basement recreation room called gillestuga and the summer cottage in the 1965 catalog. The successful pine trend of the Swedish 1970s was rooted in the large-scale rationalization of agriculture when people left the countryside for urban centers, and in which small farms were transformed into summer cottages. I have demonstrated how the ideal home in an age of unprecedented urbanization was often conjured as having a quality that reimagined the eighteenth century along with an idealized rural past as a modern solution to a sense of deracination.

Historians have noticed that the number of novels, movies, and television series featuring the move from the countryside to the city and the trauma of urbanization must be related to the structural transformation of Sweden. Building on that argument, this dissertation offers a case study by placing the idealization of the Larsson dwelling, manor house culture, and the rural past in that context. In describing this ideal, the publications share the same rhetoric of trivsel and hemtrevnad, meaning to make it cozy and pleasant, a Swedish version of the Scandinavian hygge. As a sign of its continuous popularity, the
inspiration from the Larsson house and a rural past features among the top three most sought-after styles in Swedish auctions. Art historian Henrik Ranby describes the pine mania in the 1970s as a crisis for modernist architecture and planning. While ‘‘rustic’ became a buzzword and single-family houses soon received windows with detachable false windowpanes, decorative doors and large ‘folk kitchens’ with a dining area instead of the functionalist laboratory kitchen.’’ I have traced the roots of this development to a rural ideal established and mediated by Allt i Hemmet and Ikea in the 1950s and 1960s.

**Toward Simplification and Informal Entertainment**

Until the mid-1960s, the advisory publications focused on quality, simplification, and durable consumption for life. The seating group, featured in the Ikea and Bra bohag catalogs, had become the new symbol of conventional, status-burdened living in the promotion of the ideal home, while Allt i Hemmet took a different position by questioning the need for a sofa. Going further, Ikea dared to focus on different kinds of taste, promoting the showy cocktail cabinet—which at the time had no place in the other advisory publications—the dressing table, in contrast to the ideal of the bedroom as practical and work-oriented, and flowery wallpaper. Since the early 1950s, Ikea held a dual line by embracing the rational arguments of state agencies and also meeting those plural expressions of taste in the marketplace. The official advice promoted the rational consumption of plain goods and prioritizing saving for a vacuum cleaner, rather than a

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gilded wall clock and other expressions of wealth. Official consumption was a consumption based on needs rather than desire. In contrast to the official ideal, Marianne Fredriksson and Lena Larsson of Allt i Hemmet acknowledged a "need" to express a taste other than the official one, promoting objects with meaning beyond their mere function. In the 1950s, this particularly visionary position looked toward the acceptance of a consumption embracing other values than what was considered “correct” and rational. They saw the need for private spaces for adults, especially women, and defended the parlor, which modern architects and arbiters of taste had criticized for decades.

The official setting-up-home brochure, the Co-op, and Allt i Hemmet promoted a restrained view of household goods, highlighting utility and multipurpose use for both everyday and holiday activity. The advisory publications do not speak of “taste,” but their earnest warning against succumbing to the whims of fashion (or flowery wallpapers) conveys a message about “correct” consumption. The ideal of rational consumption was rooted in the early Co-op; this study, building on the research of Peter Aléx, demonstrates that the ideal continued into the 1960s. There were normative, moral undertones of what was understood as right and wrong in guiding reasonable consumers in their choice of home furnishings. Consumer guidance was not neutral. This study shows how domestic advice literature offers key insights into the importance of social and material histories of the home.

During the 1960s, the magazine and furniture catalogs heralded a new era of informality and unpretentiousness in everyday life. Simplifying the way people entertained and making available household goods that were easier to care for coincided with a major change in society. The ideals of the full-time homemaker were transformed
in the domestic sphere when women entered the labor market in the expanding welfare state in the 1960s. Although this was a large-scale social and economic change, its quotidian effect can be seen in the adoption of dishes that could go directly from oven to the table, stainless steel housewares, informal entertainment, and kitchens large enough to host dinner parties. Confirmed by the Consumer Agency’s survey in 1976, the young people who were setting up home followed what *Allt i Hemmet*, the Co-op, and others had propagated for years: they ate in the kitchen, even when hosting guests.4

The youthful and informal approach also appeared in the new floorbound furniture of the period. In the 1970 Co-op catalog, a young woman dressed in pants casually reclines in the low *Laban* couch, with a magazine in hand and her shoes off; this image is striking when compared with a parallel image in the 1961–1962 Bra bohag catalog, where a woman and two men sit upright with good posture, properly dressed in dark suits, ties, and polished black shoes to enjoy coffee. (Figs. 8.10 and 12.15)

Since 1960, *Allt i Hemmet* argued for incorporating the whole family in household work; by 1970, the Consumer Institute dropped the earlier one-person kitchen calculation for a new enlarged kitchen standard in which two people could cook together. By reading apartment plans and tracing the development of building norms, it is possible to examine changing values and visions of the ideal home and daily life in the evolving living space. “The modern kitchen embodies the ideology of the culture to which it belongs,” is a claim applicable to Sweden.5

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5 Oldenziel and Zachmann, “Kitchens as Technology and Politics,” 2.
Examining images of how people interact with furniture is a tool to decipher ideals. Furniture does not change the world, but it is a vital conduit in Western human lives and both reflects and adjusts to changing times and habits. This study contributes to an understanding of how material culture in everyday life can help reveal how social and economic changes on the macro level may be experienced through objects on the micro level.

The Success of Ikea in Context

By placing Ikea as a promoter of the standard kitchen and consumer guidance in the 1950s and 1960s, this study shows how the early success of Ikea was tied to the official discussions about housing. While the usual explanations of the success of Ikea are found in the corporate culture, logistics, flat-packs, and low prices, I have demonstrated that Ikea gained credibility by mediating and riding the wave of the findings of state-funded research institutions and quality control. There is a connection between the Swedish welfare state’s ambition and this commercial company. In line with Hård, this dissertation reinforces the notion of a Social Democratic consumption regime in which commercial actors such as Ikea interact with state institutions and popular movements. Having studied Ikea’s printed material of the 1970s and 1980s, historians Orsi Husz and Karin Carlson show how Ikea globalized the state Consumer Agency’s standard kitchen in 45 million catalogs and staff manuals throughout Europe and other regions in the
They thereby confirm my finding of an even earlier and more foundational interaction between the state and Ikea.

The turning point for Ikea came in Allt i Hemmet under the leadership of editor-in-chief Fredriksson, a powerful influencer on a par with experts of state institutions and the Co-op. Highlighting consumer guidance and scientific tests, the magazine in 1964 compared and contrasted Ikea with other stores. The case illustrates a radical break from the ideal of furniture of timeless quality bought for life, to an embrace of new retail methods, such as self-service and mail order, for cheap furniture that could also be of good quality. Rising from its place as the epitome of poor quality, Ikea’s investment in testing and developing durability of its furniture proved successful. The partially state-funded VDN tests and labeling guiding the consumers also contributed to the credibility and commercial success of Ikea and it confirmed the strong reliance on scientific tests and measurements in Sweden at the time. Cheering the cheap and unconventional, Allt i Hemmet paved the way for a new furniture ideal and future success of Ikea, the mail-order company that would eventually become the world’s largest furniture retailer.

Cheering the Cheap and Unconventional

The 1960s saw a dramatic shift in the rhetoric and representations of the ideal home, from “timeless quality” and durability in the first half of the decade to “personal, groovy, and cheap,” as Allt i Hemmet expressed it in the latter half. As this dissertation demonstrates, under Fredriksson's editorial hand the magazine was a driving force in shifting ideals for consumption regarding home furnishings in Sweden. She anticipated

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that the new generation was turning away from the staid bourgeois values and habits of their parents.

*Allt i Hemmet*’s 1965 setting-up-home feature marked this as a dividing line. The youthful approach to setting up home shown here appeared in the form of cheap furniture of particleboard and pine, do-it-yourself projects, and secondhand furniture that could be smartened up with colorful paints and fabrics. Having initiated the mission of unconventional and child-friendly home furnishings that were also inexpensive, *Allt i Hemmet* promoted Ikea, the Co-op, and soon Bra bohag, which had all more or less adopted the new approach.

Demonstrating her ability to interpret her time, Fredriksson understood that the generation of 1968 would choose the “neo-simple” way of living as a way to distinguish themselves from the dominant society through their consumption choices. In this way, this dissertation provides a case study confirming economic historian Husz’ suggestion that the late 1960s marked a break from the traditional poles of “correct,” that is, rational, and irrational consumption in Sweden. It was not the economic Spara, the saver, who stood against the mass-consuming Slösa, the waster, for both personifications were equally materialistic. In contrast, the generation setting up home in the late 1960s was politically aware and driven by ideals like anticapitalism, as Husz points out. Cheap particleboard, do-it-yourself projects, and secondhand furniture thereby represented anticommercial, antimaterialistic consumption.

In this transition of visions and values concerning the ideal home, the commercial actors played an active role. *Allt i Hemmet* was a driving force in shifting the discourse from an ideal of “correct” consumption into an ideal embracing simplified entertaining
and housekeeping, personalized and changeable home furnishings that were cheap and unconventional. Another sign of the changing attitude was the demise of setting-up-home publications, apart from new editions of the Co-op’s Sätta bo, and an increasing number of books on do-it-yourself projects. The rational consumer was turning into a new character: not a waster, but someone daring to acknowledge other needs, such as pleasure and emotional retreat over pure utility and long-lasting quality. The consumption of something as ephemeral as an experience was acceptable. Allt i Hemmet mediated this shift from a “correct” to a more accepting consumption ideal, while Ikea had all along met plural expressions of taste and desire in the growing consumer society. In tandem with embracing the rational arguments of state agencies, it proved to be a winning strategy for what was to become one of Sweden’s most successful companies in the global market.

Further, the discourse of the shifting concept of an ideal home shows on a small scale the larger transformations in Sweden from rural to urban, toward gender equality, with the changing expectations for the performance of family life that unfolded over these critical postwar decades. In many ways, what is considered an ideal home reflects what is cherished, missed, and longed for in a changing society.
Epilogue

Looking past the end of the period discussed in this dissertation, there is a significant change in how the Swedish government and the general public conceived of the ideal home. The two decades ending roughly in 1995 mark a turning point, where ideals become more wholly driven by the market, throwing into question the whole program of promulgating building standards and modernist housing projects, as well as expectations in interior design. This epilogue tells the story of what happened to the God bostad, the setting-up-home publications, and their related actors as the 1990s transformed Sweden.

Toward Housing Deregulation

“A more human everyday world” was the headline when Allt i Hemmet reported on the ambitions of the new 1970 edition for God bostad, a proposal that was never realized. The images in the article featured a lonely child in a sterile streetscape in contrast to children and adults playing together.¹ A magazine always in tune with current politics, Allt i Hemmet quoted the government decision behind the new God bostad and the general aim of housing politics: “The whole population shall be provided with sound, spacious, and suitably equipped dwellings of good quality at reasonable cost.”² The quote explained that

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² Ibid., 44; Boverket, Bostadspolitiken – Svensk politik för boende, planering och byggnande under 130 år (Karlskrona: Boverket, 2007), 56, quoting government proposition 1967:100, which formulated the aim of the Million Program and the whole housing policy; in its comprehensiveness, this followed up on the decisions in 1946 and 1947. Swedish text: “Hela befolkningen skall beredas sunda, rynliga, välplanerade och ändamålsenligt utrustade bostäder av god kvalitet till skäliga kostnader.”
one of the means to reach this goal was through the stipulations for state loans in *God bostad.*

In an enthusiastic six-page article, *Allt i Hemmet* reported how the new *God bostad* not only focused on the family, but also sought a mixture of households living next to each other: “old and young, sick and disabled, single and families. Small nuclear families and extended families.”\(^4\) Capturing the values of solidarity and togetherness of the time, the magazine illustrated the proposal’s idea of a common “living room” in every building, a three-minute walk away from the daycare center, shops, and sporting activities such as ice skating.\(^5\) A sunny playground for small children outside the building, preferably visible from the kitchen window, had already been included in the 1954 *God bostad.*\(^6\) *Allt i Hemmet* had repeatedly reported on the need for better service in new housing areas, and the proposal for *God bostad* focused pointedly on the social environment of the dwelling. The draft proposal also included flexible solutions such as the possibility to divide a large room with a wall and adaptability for wheelchairs.\(^7\)

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\(^3\) Bostadsstyrelsens tekniska byrå, “God bostad förslag den 15 april 1970” (photocopy).


\(^7\) Ek, “En mänskligare vardag,” 44, 48-49; Lennart Arnstad, “Lägenheten där allt är flyttbart,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 4 (1970): 70-73; Bostadsstyrelsens tekniska byrå, “God bostad förslag 1970.” Flexibility was a theme in several articles reporting on housing projects around Sweden in which the inhabitants could move the walls and change the plan according to changing needs: Lennart Arnstad and Bengt Warne, “Här bestämmer hyresgästen var väggarna skall stå!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 14, no. 12 (1969): 46-49, 78, 80, 82, 84, featuring an example from Kalmar where people can chose among 50 different plans on five different spaces; the article also reported on how people living in the first flexible apartments in Järnbrott, Göteborg, from 1953 to 1954 had taken advantage of the possibility of moving walls. The feature also included a competition for the readers. Lennart Arnstad and Bengt Warne, “AiH-tävlingen ger besked: Hyresgästerna kan planera själva!,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 10 (1970): 38-41, 102, 104, featuring the result of the competition and noting that the new *God bostad* was paving the way for such apartments with moveable walls. Lennart Arnstad, “Öxnehaga, Huskvarna: Här finns rymd, utsikt och flexibla lägenheter,” *Allt i Hemmet* 15, no. 10 (1970): 110-11, including examples with two or three bedrooms, separate living room and kitchen, or an open plan with kitchen counter pass-through or no walls at all, like the family
The revised God bostad stirred debate and criticism, especially from the building industry, which argued that the new standards prevented development, creating bureaucratic challenges and a requirement for more expensive construction. Gun Sjödin, department director at the housing board between 1948 and 1976, summarized and commented on two decades of critique against the standards of God bostad:

In reality they are characterized by an almost embarrassing matter of course—and must do so, for they rely on extraordinarily simple premises: the measurements of a human being, the measurements that s/he needs for rest and movement. They also build on the measurements of the furniture and the furnishings that s/he needs in the home and that of course also are constructed based on human measurements. Based on these known factors, the standards seek to ensure that the inhabitants shall be able to place their furniture as they wish in the dwelling and that they then will be able live there, move and potter about without giving way for or bumping into furniture and other interior fittings. It is—in short—good measurements of furniture, good measurements for circulation and use, and good alternate furnishing possibilities that the standards seek to provide the users of the dwellings.

In this straightforward way, Sjödin explained the role of the standards and how they related to human behavior in everyday life at home. Yet Sjödin could hear the chorus of complaints. It turns out, she suggested, that one of the most common problems of projects kitchen/all-room that the magazine had been discussing since the 1950s.

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not living up to standards was that the bed could not fit because of a badly placed door, even though the wall was long enough. In conclusion, Sjödin thought that standards could not guarantee top-quality dwellings and housing areas, but could “rule out the worst apartments at the bottom.”

In addition to the building industry’s critique, there were other criticisms of God bostad’s standards. When architects dissociated themselves from modernist values of functionalism and the rationalism, they negatively associated the standards with the same movement. The conflicts arising with the growing interest in preserving old housing served as another reason to question the standards as presented. Furthermore, the social assumptions that the standards relied on were outdated. By the early 1990s, original God bostad assumptions, such as a nuclear family living in a two-bedroom apartment, were still in effect, even though they reflected living conditions described 40 years earlier.

Although that aspect was one of the features that the proposal of 1970 sought to change, the new God bostad was never realized.

Instead, the standards of the 1964 God bostad remained mostly unchanged and were incorporated in the 1975 Svensk byggnorm, SBN 75, the Swedish Building Code, which made them law even for the few buildings constructed without state loans. This change also meant that the standards were prerequisites for receiving a building permit. A couple

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10 Ibid., 19. Swedish text. “Med normer kan man så att säga reglera bort de sämsta lägenheterna i botten”.

She also discussed how the abolishment of a maximum of surface in 1962 led to remarkably big differences in size of apartments of the same number of rooms, and also one-bedroom apartments that are larger than two-bedroom apartments, which may simplify for builders but not for the users, who get to pay more because of neglect of efficient use of surface. Ibid.

of years later, accessibility for wheelchairs also became a requirement. Having compared the standards throughout this period, architect Lennart Holm found the biggest step between the first standards of 1921 and Westholm’s so-called bible of 1942, when bathrooms were first included. Since then, Holm found “amazingly small changes” compared to the rules as they were in 1989. For example, the minimum space required for a living room in a one-bedroom apartment or larger had only increased a couple of square meters from 18 in 1921 to 20 in 1960, which remained in the standards of 1989.

Deregulation was the keyword for the 1990s and the critique of building standards resulted in their abolishment in favor of even more basic requirements. Architects and city planners returned to historic density and adopted postmodern playfulness at odds with the twentieth-century emphasis on spatial standards and regularity. Not since 1900 had apartment plans followed the shape of a building in such a way. Holm observed that this resulted in many apartments not living up to the previous building standards’ requirements for access to sunlight and a ban on passageways through rooms. With the

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12 Björkman, “Statliga bostadsregler,” 90; Lennart Holm, “Välfärdförsäkring,” in *Stockholm blir stor stad: Tiden 1948–1998* (Stockholm: Stockholms Byggnadsförening and Byggförlaget, 1998), 120; Eriksson, “Bostaden som kunskapsobjekt,” 51. The 1967 government proposition included the rationalizations needed to achieve the goal of the Million Program. One requirement was therefore to collect all state rules for construction into one collective building code, and the technical standards were included in the first *Svensk byggnorm*, SBN 67, while the standards regarding the dwelling from *God bostad* were included in 1975. (A new edition of *God bostad*, including accessibility, came in 1976.) To further ensure quality control in the grand city developments of the time, a new authority was established in 1967, Statens planverk. In 1989, the standards were transferred to *Boverkets nybyggnadsregler*, NR, and adapted to new legislation. Holm, “Välfärdes lägenheter,” 119-20. Lennart Holm was director general of Statens planverk 1969-1988. In 1988, Statens planverk and Statens bostadsstyrelse merged as Statens plan- och bostadsverk, then changed to Boverket in 1991, which still exists.


14 Ibid., 126. The need for sunlight in apartments and the subsequent orientation of the buildings were introduced in the complement to the 1954 *God bostad* to ensure the quality of the dwelling. The 1960 and 1964 *God bostad* featured a special sun value diagram to aid in calculating the minimum level of sunlight reaching each apartment. It was abolished in the transfer to SBN 75. Gun Hallberg and Alice Thiberg, “Respektera baskraven,” in *Bostadsboken*, ed. Sven Thiberg (Stockholm: Statens råd för
ambition to promote technical development and cheaper construction, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket) replaced the old standards with new requirements. There were no longer minimum measurements for different rooms to ensure furnishings would fit, no requirements for features such as a neutral passage from the entryway to rooms, and no set minimum amount of sunlight in the dwelling. The new requirements only met basic functions: prepare and store food, furnish a place to sleep, maintain personal hygiene, and receive daylight. On the other hand, the requirement to meet the needs of the disabled was strengthened with wider passages and doorframes.¹⁵

But by and large, socially responsible housing politics disappeared in the 1990s.

When a nonsocialist government took over in 1991, one of its first missions was the elimination of the Ministry of Housing, along with gradually ending the state subventions to housing construction. In promoting market-oriented housing, condominiums rather than rental apartments had become the model for the new government. Dwellings thereby changed from being the right of the citizen to a commodity for those who could afford it. The recession of the early 1990s led to increasing unemployment, and a collapsing housing market and bank crisis. The number of empty apartments in Sweden grew from a

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¹⁵ Eriksson, “Bostaden som kunskapsobjekt,” 50-51. Eriksson points out how the supporting text disappeared when God bostad transferred to Svensk byggnorm, making the motives for the requirements accessible only in separate publications, until they completely disappeared with the new building rules based on function in 1993–1994. Suitable measurements became mere recommendations published as Byggstandardiseringsens standardblad. Ibid. In 1994, Boverkets byggregler; BBR, building rules, replaced the previous nybyggnadsregler; NR, which was the first effort to introduce requirements based on function. There are also Boverkets konstruktionsregler; BKR, rules regulating construction. BBR was revised in 2006–2008 to develop requirements that are easier to verify along with a publication with the rules, relevant laws, and regulations. Boverket, “Byggregler – en historisk översikt från BABS till BBR 23,” pro memoria March 28, 2017, accessed April 9, 2020, https://www.boverket.se/contentassets/084acb7f8958448897248ef9a412bebb/byggregler---en-historisk-oversikt-fran-babs-till-bbr-23.pdf.
couple of thousand in 1990 to 45,000 in 1997, which, along with diminished state support, resulted in record low construction of about 10,000 apartments per year. When the Social Democrats won reelection in 1994, they chose not to restore the Ministry of Housing, largely because the changed housing politics had made housing a welcome source of income for the state at a time of crisis. Having been a central concern of the state throughout the postwar period, housing by the mid-1990s was left to the market. These political shifts seemingly inaugurated radically new attitudes about housing and furnishing standards. Yet the deep Swedish attachment to rigorous study, testing and consumer protection survived in new forms even amid unprecedented deregulation.

**The End of the Setting-up-home Brochure and Loan**

How young households had set up home was the topic of a thorough survey in 1976. It was comparable to the housing investigations of the 1940s and after, with similar results. Under the leadership of Alice Thiberg of the Consumer Agency, the project team interviewed 145 households with adults under 30 years of age and took photographs of their homes. They had all moved in the three years before, when the apartment buildings were new. Starting with a comparison of existing plans against the recommendations of *God bostad*, the results showed that the size and dimensions of the rooms usually lived up to the standards. The possibility of placing furniture, however, was less easily reconciled.

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in some rooms because of the proportions of the rooms or placement of doors and windows.\textsuperscript{17}

The most interesting result of the investigation, according to Thiberg and the Consumer Agency report, related to how people furnished their living rooms. Whereas the 1964 \textit{God bostad} showed plans for a dining set in the living room, only nine percent of the households conformed on this point.\textsuperscript{18} Instead, the young people who were setting up home followed what \textit{Allt i Hemmet}, the Co-op, and others had promoted for years: they ate in the kitchen, even when hosting guests. Television had further changed habits, and meals were also consumed in front of the TV, either with or without guests. The absence of a dining set, however, did not make the living room more spacious.

On the contrary, the result showed the influence of tendencies demonstrated in the \textit{Ikea}, \textit{Bra bohag}, and the Co-op catalogs of the late 1960s and 1970. The seating groups were much more spacious than what the 1964 \textit{God bostad} calculated. Most of the young households not only had a sofa and a couple of easy chairs but \textit{two} sofas and an easy chair, which were also larger than what had been anticipated in the standards. Wall-covering shelving and storage systems, so prevalent in the furniture catalogs, existed in 140 of the 145 living rooms, and they were often longer than the three meters calculated in \textit{God bostad}. In addition, new types of furniture had arrived, such as a stereo bench in

\textsuperscript{17} Architect Birgitta Lindström and sociologist Owe Åhlund, researchers at the faculty of engineering of Lund University conducted the investigation in two areas of Malmö in southern Sweden, Holma with rental apartments in three- and nine-story buildings and Almvik, with condominiums in two-story buildings with external galleries. There were one- to three-bedroom apartments. Konsumentverket, \textit{Möbler och möblering i unga hushåll}, Rapport 1977:2 (Stockholm: Konsumentverket, 1977); Alice Thiberg, “Möbler och möblering i unga hushåll: Presentation vid Nordiska museets seminarium den 18 november 2010,” document attached to e-mail to author, March 20, 2014. In the archives of the Nordic Museum, there are 694 slides from the investigation and other related material, Alice Thiberg’s archive acc. no. 2010/023.

\textsuperscript{18} Konsumentverket, \textit{Möbler och möblering i unga hushåll}, 7-8, 66; Thiberg, “Möbler och möblering i unga hushåll,” n.p.
more than a third of the living rooms, along with freestanding speakers and other items such as aquariums and large plants taking up space. Half of the women and two-thirds of the men thought the living room was too small and wanted it to be more spacious.19 While the households claimed that they had furnished the living space according to their own ideas, Thiberg observed that the homes were especially alike in that they had too much furniture. Sixty percent had found inspiration in furniture stores, catalogs, and magazines, but a third of the households regretted their purchases, especially of upholstered furniture, and most of them wanted more information.20

In 1976, the same year as the Malmö survey, the Consumer Agency published the setting-up-home brochure *Bosättningsråd* for the first time since 1965.21 The drawing of an airy living room on the cover of the brochure resembled the interiors of *Allt i Hemmet*, with simple warehouse shelving rather than the high-grade woods seen in the furniture catalogs. (Fig.) Further adding to the impression of spaciousness, there was no seating group, only a round table with three lightweight wooden armchairs, an easily moveable wicker chair by the stereo, and a daybed with large pillows instead of a conventional sofa. A knitting project in a basket and the newspaper left on the daybed added to the impression of a relaxed atmosphere created for both children and adults. The suggestion of informality recalled Carl Larsson’s *Lazy Corner* image where a newspaper was

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depicted casually forgotten on the sofa. Thiberg noticed the contrast between the official image and the lived interiors of young households in Malmö. She recalled that the Consumer Agency argued in *Bosättningsråd* “for a way of forming the home so as to give room for activities and freedom to live without status claims and to be thrifty with the resources of the household.” Indeed, it reflected the mission of *Allt i Hemmet* and the Co-op as well.

With its mission to empower consumers, the Consumer Agency provided advice on how to set up home, choose furniture, and maintain the dwelling through publications, exhibitions, and also educational material for schools. They also researched living habits to develop new standards adjusted to current living conditions. On the threshold of the 1990s, the tenth and last edition of *Bosättningsråd* was published in 1989. *Bosättningsråd* recalled decades of promoting an ideal home liberated from the preoccupation with status objects, focused instead on what suited one’s own needs and reflective of rational consumption.

Times were changing, though, and the growing ideology of deregulation and market-driven consumption put an end to state efforts to advise consumers on how to furnish a home. In 1981, the government abolished the state setting-up-home loan, which had existed since 1938, even though the Consumer Agency had suggested ameliorating rather

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23 Ibid. Alice Thiberg also contributed to the debate on the strengthening of the market versus the Consumer Agency’s efforts to promote simplification and function, and received a response from Lennart Ekmark of Ikea, among others. Alice Thiberg, “Formen som marknadsförare,” *Konsumenträtt & ekonomi*, no. 2 (1978): 8-11. For high school students and other interested readers, the agency published a book on living now and then, including a teacher’s handbook. *Konsumentverket, Boende förr och nu* (Stockholm: Konsumentverket, 1991).
than eliminating the loan. Eventually, the government also altered the role of the Consumer Agency, removing its mandate to influence public opinion and publish handbooks on how to plan a kitchen or bathroom. The Consumer Agency was not to research performance, product development, or standardization, except regarding safety. Alice Thiberg concludes: “The market has taken over. There is no research in this area. The Consumer Agency does other things.”

Renewed, Sustainable Quality Control

Regarding furniture, there was a similar development. The systematic studies of furniture design that Erik Berglund began in 1948, constituted in 1967 as the Furniture Institute (Möbelinstitutet), which continued to research, develop, and control the quality of furniture with VDN declarations, was renamed Möbelfakta in 1972. In the 1980s, however, designers and producers challenged rational values that could be measured, and, along with languishing consumer education and lack of surveys on how people live and what they desire, the Furniture Institute finally closed in 1995.

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24 “Förordning om statligt bosättningslån,” Svensk författningssamling, SFS no. 1976:264 abolished through SFS 1981:1180. Nils Svensson et al, “Motion: Återinförandet av statligt bosättningslån,” motion 1982/83:456, Swedish Parliament. Seven Social Democratic parliamentarians suggested reintroducing the setting-up-home loan since, following its retirement, the municipal social authorities had been called on to support many families; the loan, according to the proposal, had been a better alternative.

25 Thiberg, “Möbler och möblering i unga hushåll,” n.p. Swedish text: “Marknaden har tagit över. Ingen forskning på området. Konsumentverket sysslar med annat.” See also Elsässer, Att skapa en konsument, discussing how the involvement of the state decreased while sustainable development became a goal of the new consumer politics of the 1990s, making environment a focus for normative messages. Consequently, topics relating to housing, such as kitchens and cleaning, received less attention in the magazine Råd & Rön; the publication also commented on how the Consumer Agency had lost competence on an important subject when Alice Thiberg retired at this time. Elsässer, Att skapa en konsument, 260-68, 325-45, 357-59, 382-84. For more on Thiberg, her correspondence with Ikea in the 1970s, and changing consumer policy, see Husz and Carlsson, “Kökskunskap,” 275-99.

26 Berglund, Talat om kvalitet, 9-10, 136-42. Erik Berglund was the director of the institute 1967-1985, and Sten Engdal, who conducted many studies with Berglund, also worked there. Funding came from furniture associations, companies, the state, and commissions. Ibid., 67-69.
Nevertheless, consumers and producers saw a new need for quality control, and the Swedish wood and furniture industry (Trä- och Möbelföretagen, TMF) reintroduced Möbefakta in 2011. Its new focus includes technical standards and functional standards keyed to the European organization CEN, which oversees safety control, performance, measurements, durability, fire protection, and fabrics. The new labeling further promotes sustainable development in terms of environmentally friendly production along with a social responsibility requiring that producers and subcontractors adhere to the UN Global Compact directive.  

As of 2020, the TMF has further strengthened consumer knowledge through labeling and collaborating with the Swedish Environmental Research Institute (IVL) in Möbefakta 2.0. In this way, the long tradition of consumer education and quality control continues in Sweden, now incorporating the contemporary awareness of environmental, fair trade, and human rights issues.

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27 Trä- och möbelföretagen, Med Möbefakta vet du!, brochure distributed at the Stockholm Furniture Fair 2016, n.p. See also www.mobelfakta.se

Illustrations

Preface

In 1958, Ann-Marie Perers won the national competition “Machines in the Home,” which the national newspaper, Dagens Nyheter, featured with a photo from her kitchen with daughter Karin.

Introduction

In Sweden, the GDP per capita grew enormously from c. 40,000 kronor in the late 1940s to c. 125,000 kronor in the mid-1970s, increasing purchasing power from the early 1950s.
Chapter One: From Housing Crisis to the People’s Home

Fig. 1.1 Carl Malmsten’s furnishings in the exhibition Home in the Collective House, Stockholm, 1935.

Fig. 1.2 Images of new housing areas were included as visual guidelines in the 1954 God bostad; showing Karlskoga. Balconies, greenery, and playgrounds were typical features.
Fig. 1.3 A typical two-bedroom apartment from the 1950s, 70 square meters, with many features. The entrance hall connects to most of the rooms. The placement of the windows gives visibility through the apartment, and the plan allows for circulation through entrance hall, kitchen, bedroom, and living room. Work and dining areas are separate, with bay window in the kitchen. All storage is built-in. Floor space is efficiently used in the rooms, while easy to furnish. Daylight comes into the bathroom and the pulled-in balcony is protected from the wind. In the 1950s, the two-bedroom apartment for a family was still more a dream than a reality. Architect O. Elgqvist, HSB, Stockholm, 1953.
Fig. 2.1 Published by the Home’s Research Institute (HFI) in 1952, Kök: planering inredning (The Kitchen, Its Planning and Interior) formed the basis for God bostad. The caption explains that doing the dishes for the woman in the top image is easy and took eight minutes, as the sink allows for a logical work process and convenient posture along with efficient equipment, while in the image below the work is tiring and takes almost twice as much time, 14 minutes.
Fig. 2.2 By combining standardized units of cabinets and sinks in a rational way, the housing board stipulated that “a well-planned kitchen shall give adequate work areas and appropriate work positions as well as sufficient and well-disposed work and storage spaces.” *God bostad* (1954).

Fig. 2.3 A distance of ten centimeters from the elbow to the countertop suits most kitchen work, according to the caption in *Kök: planering inredning*, thus arguing for a work height of 85 cm. The measurements are based on the average height of a Swedish woman, 164 cm plus heels.
Figs. 2.4-5 Launched in 1955, Ikea’s Pax series comprised wall-mounted kitchen cabinets, including glass drawers for spices, and a drawer unit for linen and other household items. In 1956, Ikea included lower cabinets and a tall cupboard for storage, all including the standardized measurements of 60 cm wide and 60 cm deep, which are still considered standard in Sweden. The height was also standard, 85 cm.
Fig. 2.6 Already in the first issue in 1956, *Allt i Hemmet* explained how, by removing a wall, the Rydin family obtained “a large, airy dream kitchen, where the whole family is comfortable and mother is saved the trouble of walking an extra 45 kilometers back and forth in the kitchen every year.”

Fig. 2.7 Ria Wägner, one of the first TV personalities in Sweden, promotes the large kitchen, where the guests prefer to gather, and presents a “dreamlike image” she had seen in an American magazine. She describes the image of the family room as “a large kitchen designed in the American way, with a fireplace, a large, durable drop-leaf table, couches placed at an angle, an easy chair and large cabinets for toys, and a space, of course, for the television.”
Fig. 2.8 Homemaker Viveka Holmquist has planned her ideal family kitchen with room for activities, including a climbing tree, a carpenter’s bench, and a drawing table.
Fig. 2.9 Allt i Hemmet advocated large family kitchens, inspired by both traditional country kitchens and the postwar American “family room.” Part of this effort involved launching a competition in 1957.

Fig. 2.10 The magazine provided a selection of 58 pieces of furniture so that readers could collage them on the floor plan and write a description for their submission. The actual kitchen section was set out according to the rational Swedish standard kitchen as described in the 1954 God bostad, with standardized, built-in cabinets, sink, refrigerator, and pantry. The novelty was the size, 36 square meters, which made other furnishing options possible beyond the kitchen, around 10 square meters, that God bostad suggested.
Fig. 2.11 The winner of the competition, Elsie Jonsson, included a radio and a sewing machine (in its case) by the seats and work furniture. Abstract art on the wall emphasizes the modernity of the space.

Fig. 2.12 The promotion of crafts, as seen in the loom and children’s right to play and space, were key features of the ideal family kitchen, including the winning contribution of *Allt i Hemmet*’s competition.
Fig. 2.13 In 1939, at the exhibition Our Home (Vår bostad) at the Röhsska Museum of Design and Craft in Gothenburg, G.A. Berg took a prominent place by furnishing the model apartment installed to illustrate interior design that fit the budget of the setting-up-home loan. Berg’s new branch, Aby Möbler (Aby Furniture), targeted the recipients of such loans and was the first of its kind on the market.

Fig. 2.14 Taken from the setting-up-home brochure from 1955, this image features a family in their living room; visible on the wall behind them is an open cabinet with various carpentry tools and a drill. This suggests that the state assumed a refined level of competence in basic skills with crafts. With its traditional and vernacular roots, the informality of the stick-back chair suited both kitchen and living room.
Fig. 2.15 In 1957, Ikea promoted a new rocking chair, *Gunga Din*, prompting memories of grandparents: “One sits perfectly in it—do you remember how grandmother always used to fall asleep in her rocking chair? . . . It’s about time the nice old rocking chair came into fashion again.” It was also promoted as an “ultra-modern rocking chair that, in a reverential manner, blends into every environment, bringing coziness and happiness.”

Figs. 2.16-17 Ilmari Tapiovaara’s stick-back chair *Fanett* for Edsbyn and Thea Leonard’s *Flamingo* for Nässjö Stolfabrik, both from 1955.
Fig. 2.18 In spite of modernist efforts to do away with the couch, the kitchen of the 1954 God bostad had sufficient space for a kitchen couch, which was revived and featured in a modern version in the 1955 Bosättning.

Fig. 2.19 In Allt i Hemmet 3/1957, architect Lennart Holm presented his ideas of a family kitchen as a “working center of the home,” placed next to a bathroom with laundry facilities.
Fig. 2.20 At the Internationale Bauausstellung (International Building Exhibition, Interbau) in Berlin in 1957, “the biggest housing exhibition in the world after the war,” *Allt i Hemmet* had another opportunity to promote the family kitchen. Lena Larsson was selected to design one of the six Swedish apartments.

Fig. 2.21 The mother in Larsson’s imaginary family is described as unconventional, as guests may sit down in the family kitchen, where the children’s drawings are featured. She places two tables in the space so that nothing needs to be cleared away just because it is time to eat. While the family kitchen did not surprise visitors to the exhibition, it was the Swedish standard kitchen that attracted attention, according to Marianne Fredriksson’s report.
Fig. 2.22 Lena Larsson placed different games and a musical instrument on the table intended for activities in her family kitchen at Interbau in Berlin.

Fig. 2.23 At Interbau, Lena Larsson combined the kitchen and living room at the center of the apartment, and turned the biggest room into a master bedroom with comfortable furniture for sitting. The children have their own rooms, one for the two girls and one for the boy (to the right).
Chapter Three: Living in the Living Room?

Fig. 3.1 The first Ikea catalog (1951) featured three dining sets, including one in “Renaissance” style, made of “antique-treated oak with hand-carved ornaments.”

Fig. 3.2 In *Hemiredning*, Lena Larsson and Elias Svedberg emphasized their educational effort: “Compare these images! It is not difficult to see how clumsily and soullessly the details are distorted in the furniture suite below compared with the stylistically correct design of the real Renaissance cabinet and chair to the right.” Their conclusion, then, was that “honesty is the best policy.”
Fig. 3.3 In 1955, Ikea launched the *Original Haupt N.M.* It was a copy of a Gustavian dresser produced by Georg Haupt, the most famous Swedish cabinetmaker of the late eighteenth century, in the collection of the Nordiska museet in Stockholm.
Fig. 3.4 In 1959–60, Bra bohag promoted the exclusive seating groups *Stocksund* (above) and *Manhattan* by Dux as being “For those seeking the very best in comfort and at the same time desiring a harmonious home where the classic lines of the furniture give a distinguished atmosphere anchored in old traditions.”
Fig. 3.5 In 1954, Ikea introduced its first Gustavian type of furniture, the Swedish pearl-gray or bone-white version of Louis XVI style: “There’s nothing new under the sun. Here they go again, the old nice chairs with carved wheatsheaf detail—in a modern interior with a beautiful round mahogany table and a lacquered cabinet of the most modern cut. . . . A romantic interior for practical use.”

Fig. 3.6 In 1957, the Ikea catalog explains that “many visiting customers have asked for a furniture suite in this style.” The Gustavian dining set Desirée became so popular that it was featured in the Ikea catalog until 1976.
Fig. 3.7 With a rural touch, the 1955 series Tranås included a solid stick-back chair and a gate-legged table, a space-saving model whose design was common since the eighteenth century. The pearl-gray corner cabinet had blue interior, also available in other color combinations. Through Tranås, Ikea stated, “Modern people with good taste choose their household goods at Ikea—the specialist for complete interiors.”

Fig. 3.8 In 1955, the official setting-up-home brochure Bosättning featured a corner cabinet based on traditional cabinet-making, vernacular-type stick-back chairs finished with eighteenth-century-inspired checkered fabric, and a wooden couch at the table large enough for work and leisure, according to the caption.
Fig. 3.9 A living room with a dining set at its center could easily turn into a haven for adults, as depicted in the official setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning* in the 1940s: “Like so many of his friends, the poor boy stands in the doorway to the family’s parlor where he is never allowed to be, as the furniture is too fragile and crowded. He does not really have a place in the home.”

Fig. 3.10 *Allt i Hemmet* described the family room of Erk and Maja as “24 square meters for play and work.”
Fig. 3.11 Children’s play area in the 1957 family room of Erk and Maja, opposite the other view of the room. See fig. 3.10.

Fig. 3.12 The “active room” for a couple in the Co-op’s Vårt hem (1956), featuring two desks in a row in front of the window, with a swivel work chair, Windsor chair, corkboard, a relaxing daybed, and shelves.

Fig. 3.13 Another view of Allt i Hemmet’s family room for Erk and Maja.
Fig. 3.14 The architect’s vision of how to furnish the all-room in Baronbackarna, Örebro, to the left, and how the inhabitants interpreted the assignment to the right. From Allt i Hemmet’s editorial “In defense of the parlor” from 1958.
Fig. 3.15 The 1955 *Bosättning* features *Lilla Åland* (1942) by Carl Malmsten and five other chairs offering “good support and proper body posture for different activities.”
Fig. 3.16 The parlor of Erk and Maja, with fold-down writing desk to the right, in *Allt i Hemmet* 1957.

Fig. 3.17 A typical wall arrangement promoted in the 1955 official setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning.*
Fig. 3.18 “Into the living room, says the architect,” reads the caption of Marianne Fredriksson’s article “Mother needs the parlor” in *Allt i Hemmet* 1956.

Fig. 3.19 In 1959, Ikea featured the first interior with a TV set in the catalog: “TV creates new furnishing problems, but, properly solved, they offer a new image of coziness at home.”
Fig. 3.20 In 1957–58, Bra bohag featured an interior by Sven Engström with the caption: “The television set creates new furnishing problems.”
Fig. 3.21 Lena Larsson had tested “the rules” she taught in *Allt i Hemmet*: there should be nothing between the seating furniture and the TV, and the distance from the television should be far enough that one’s clenched hand on a straight arm will cover the screen.

Fig. 3.22 In 1959, Ikea introduced “Vivel—for the practical background wall of the all-room,” and advised that, for a wall arrangement with shelves, writing-surface, and cupboards, “please place the TV in the center.”
Fig. 4.1 The Co-op’s Vårt hem did not discuss modernity, style, or designer names. Rather, the book provided facts related to consumer education; the Jacobsen plywood chair, for example, could be damaged if struck, and the bentwood chairs, while not cheap, were well built and strong.

Fig. 4.2 While promoting space-saving and multipurpose features, the Co-op featured a folding table that served both as a work surface along the wall and as a “festive dining table for those times when not eating in the kitchen.” Designed by Sune Fromell.
Fig. 4.3 In 1957, Marianne Fredriksson and Lena Larsson stated: “Our living rooms are solid and objective, and must be so. How nice then for a woman to potter about in her modern home somewhere and make it as sweet—and perhaps slightly impractical—as she likes.”
Fig. 4.4 In 1955, Ikea presented a Danish-inspired seating group “for the person who appreciates modern design.”

Fig. 4.5 The Rococo revival group Bodoni was Ikea’s first seating group in historical revival style, introduced in 1953. In 1955, the company presented the suite as “beautiful and well-made furniture for the ‘parlor.’”
Fig. 4.6 Ikea started an interior design service in 1954. The following year, customers were asked to answer 20 questions so that the interior designer could get to know their taste as much as possible. “We are not here to judge. One type of taste is as good as another,” Ikea declared.

Fig. 4.7 The 1955 Bosättning’s ideal was modernist, practical furniture—easily moved, easily cared for, and durable, using for example wooden armrests instead of upholstered ones, and durable, solid constructions.
Fig. 4.8 Informal social gathering in the official setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning* from 1955.

Fig. 4.9 The same group enjoying an informal get-together in the 1948 *Bosättning*. 
Fig. 4.10 And in the Bra bohag catalog, 1959–60.

Fig. 4.11 In 1957, Lena Larsson furnished a room for informal entertainment. The furniture provides an inviting, open space between sofa and coffee table, with easy chairs without armrests, allowing guests to turn in different directions to talk to people and move around.
Fig. 4.12 “‘Help yourself . . .’—the nice and casual American way of throwing a dinner party is becoming more and more popular here in Sweden. Everybody feels at home and helps out . . . the hostess doesn’t have to feel rushed to wait on everyone.” A “nice and modern” party advertised in 1957–58.
Fig. 4.13 Advertisement promoting informal get-together with mustard and sausages.
Fig. 4.14 “Sunday Dinner” in the 1959–60 Bra bohag catalog. According to the 1960 God bostad, a finer meal on Sundays was an occasion for the family to gather in the living room.

Fig. 4.15 “On Sunday, you set the table with a linen tablecloth, right? More than one million Swedish housewives set the Sunday dining table with a linen tablecloth!” Advertisement in Allt i Hemmet 1959.
Chapter Five: Sleep Research and Promotion of a Better Bed Culture

Fig. 5.1 In 1948, beds were the focus of the first investigation of furniture functionality in Sweden.

Fig. 5.2 “Swing creates good bed culture even in small apartments.” Already in 1953, Ikea presented angular bed placement in the living room.
Fig. 5.3 In 1955, the official setting-up-home brochure *Bosättning* presented beds in an angle as a way “to create an inviting corner” in the living room.

Fig. 5.4 In 1957, Lena Larsson and Marianne Fredriksson presented five ways to sleep in the living room, here in collaboration with setting-up-home consultant Birgit Zetterquist.
Fig. 5.5 The Ikea catalogs featured drawings of a person lying in the “right” and “wrong” anatomical position on “the most important piece of furniture in the home.”

Fig. 5.6 “Your mood and general well-being depend highly on sleep and rest. The Home Research Institute also establishes that the bed is the most important piece of furniture in the home.” Ikea catalog 1955.
Figs. 5.7-8 In 1956, Ikea received the highest ranking for its foam rubber mattresses from the quality control organization VDN. The 1957 catalog featured the VDN emblem and supported Sencello’s hygienic qualities through “the latest achievements of science”: “FOAM RUBBER—for the combined bedroom and living room. You escape the dust that inexorably comes with mattresses of older type. If you choose teak surfaces, cleaning will be reduced to a minimum. THE HOMEMAKER’S BEST HELP!”
Fig. 5.9 “The most comfortable time of the day.” Advertisement in Allt i Hemmet in 1957–58.
Fig. 5.10 In 1957, Marianne Fredriksson and Lena Larsson introduced the double bed as “often a very cozy solution.”
Fig. 5.11 The 1954 *God bostad* stated: “A bedroom for two people shall have a surface of at least 10 square meters and should be designed so that two separate beds can stand along a wall without being below a window.” Even though two beds might not be needed in the room, *God bostad* emphasized that it is “important to follow the rule, to make sure the room has a good, universal utility.”
Part Two, 1960–1965: Rational Consumption and Urbanization

Chapter Six: The Rational Consumer Sets Up Home

Figs. 6.1-2 The Bra bohag catalog of 1962–63 fostered rational consumption: “You know how I used to glut on pastry and Danish rolls with the afternoon coffee. I don’t do that anymore, and just like that I’ve almost saved up for this sofa. And Anders smokes a couple cigarettes less a day. He hardly notices the difference.”
Fig. 6.3 The Co-op’s popular book on how to set up home, Sätta bo, had a print run of 96,000 copies from 1962 to 1971.
Fig. 6.4 In 1960, Birgit Sunesson summarized the issue at stake: “But what about dwellings? How does it help with kitchen interiors and furniture on a human scale, when individual rooms do not support furniture and people?”

Fig. 6.5 Allt i Hemmet compared two 12-square-meter bedroom plans. The left one is so rectangular that it does not fit two beds side by side with enough space for a person to pass through easily; the other has proportions that enable a traditional master bedroom to be furnished with two twin beds perpendicular to the wall.

Fig. 6.6 As most families had a dining set and seating group, according to investigations, the 1960 God bostad included drawings of such furniture and how much space they required in a room.
Fig. 6.7 The 1964 *God bostad* included small drawings of different types of furniture and how much space was needed around them, from piano and TV to twin beds, seating groups, and dining tables with seating for eight.

Fig. 6.8 Another new feature in the 1964 *God bostad* showed how much space a person needed to pass between a piece of furniture and a wall, such as the space required to pull out a drawer—everything to enable architects to design apartments that gave enough space for their inhabitants.
Figs. 6.9-10 In the Co-op brochure "reflect, plan, furnish," young couples could cut out pieces of furniture and place them on a grid to plan their home.
Figs. 6.11-12 In line with the findings of the report *Skäp*, Bra bohag featured Axel Larsson’s cupboard *Signum* showing how much china, glass, flatware, and other utensils could fit in the cupboard.
Fig. 6.13 Having measured and tested a variety of items—underwear, writing paper, sewing notions, and china—Erik Berglund and Sten Engdal derived three useful measurements for shelves and drawers.

Fig. 6.14 The fictional couple in the Co-op’s Sätta bo chose units from the Contenta series for the living room, bedroom, and entrance hall. Designed by Erik Berglund and Sten Engdal.
Fig. 6.15 “We enjoy an evening at home.” The 1959–60 Bra bohag catalog promoted the storage unit Öresund as a “natural place for the TV set and generous storage space for everything relating to hobbies and delightful comfy evenings at home.” Designed by Danish architect Børge Mogensen.
Fig. 6.16 “The home that brings friends together is a home that collects Royal System.” Below the cocktail cabinet is the teak ice bucket Congo by Jens Quistgaard from the 1950s. Advertisement from 1961.
Fig. 6.17 “There should be lace on sheets and pillowcases—then they are the most beautiful! . . . A luxury you can indulge in, as the beautiful, durable lace is machine washable.” Advertisement from 1960.

Fig. 6.18 The 1965 Bosättning began in a matter-of-fact way with the contours of a house, including line drawings of the dwelling’s functions.
Fig. 6.19 Based on the setting-up-home loan, the couple in Allt i Hemmet set up home for 4,000 kronor and could still afford a radio, record player, and vacuum cleaner. They made their sofa themselves, for just 200 kronor. Do-it-yourself furniture was a novelty in 1962.
Fig. 6.20 In 1961–62, Bra bohag offered a more conventional approach than Allt i Hemmet in their suggestion for a one-bedroom apartment for a newly married couple.

Fig. 6.21 The 1962 Ikea catalog included a suggestion for how a newlywed couple could furnish a one-bedroom apartment within the limits of the state setting-up-home loan of 4,000 kronor. The furniture cost about 3,000 kr, leaving 1,000 for linen, household goods, and cleaning utilities.
Chapter Seven: Simplification and Informality in the Kitchen and Living Room

Fig. 7.1 In 1961, “The most welcome man in the world...” was the heading of an advertisement for the American dishwasher producer Kenwood. “Then your wife will get more time to spend with you and the children and you will be able to enjoy a cozy, happy family life together, which means infinitely so much more...”

Fig. 7.2 In contrast, the Swedish producer Electrolux had chosen a more scientific approach: “Your wife spares her back and her hands... From a hygienic standpoint, the result will be better than before as the machine can work with really hot water.” The headline assured the viewer that, “There is joy in labor here...” Further illustrating a pragmatic, ideal Swedish married life, the copy ended: “Do not wait to purchase until her next birthday. Your wife is actually worth getting an Electrolux dishwasher today.”
Fig. 7.3 The 1965 Ikea catalog promoted God bostad’s message of eating in the kitchen, showing “a well-planned dining alcove for weekends as well as weekdays.”

Fig. 7.4 In comparison to the formal Sunday dinner promoted in the late 1950s, a glass bowl of shrimp, some bread, and a toaster on a table signified greater informality at mealtimes.
Fig. 7.5 Plain white and discreet, the ideal china for everyday use and for parties suited an ideal of rational consumption. If the previous Co-op book *Vårt hem* (1956) included some plates decorated with a willow tree, by 1962 the ideal was neutral. Meeting this standard, Wilhelm Kåge’s *Grå ränder*, a softer version of his 1933 service *Praktika*, was plain white with discreet gray stripes around the rim. In *Sätta bo*, Henrikson-Abelin picked the patterned *Berså* only as a butter dish.
Fig. 7.6 Plain white plates set the dinner table, also Bra bohag catalog 1960–61, used the Berså pattern as an accent, appearing only on the pitcher and a small bowl. In the illustration’s background, a teenage girl is bringing coffee to her mother by the coffee table, and the cups are, again, plain white.
Fig. 7.7 The tendency toward simplification and eating in the kitchen did not equate to carelessness. Comparative table settings in *Allt i Hemmet* in 1963.
Figs. 7.8-9 From a big dinner to dancing in just a few minutes, as suggested in Allt i Hemmet in 1964.
Fig. 7.10 Properly dressed and seated for entertaining with coffee in the 1961–62 *Bra bohag* catalog.

Fig. 7.11 An idealized image of a casual evening at home from the 1950s, also on the cover of *Bra bohag*’s advisory book from 1963 *Live Better, Feel More at Home*: man with newspaper, woman knitting, and cups on the coffee table.
Fig. 7.12 In contrast to the tableau of wholesome knitting and coffee drinking, a more glamorous type of informal entertainment appeared in advertisements in *Allt i Hemmet* in the 1960s. “Evening with guests—more festive, luxurious, with two couches, of course! More comfortable as well.”

Fig. 7.13 In another example, a representation of this informal lifestyle—just as neat and glamorous—shows a woman on a couch while the man lights her cigarette.
Chapter Eight: “Timeless Quality”:
Reviving the Eighteenth Century and the Rural Past

Fig. 8.1 The Co-op’s “timeless” interior features Carl Malmsten’s coffee table Hemmakvällar (Evenings at home), couch Fästfolket (The engaged), floor lamp Staken, and cabinet from the suite Talavid.

Fig. 8.2 Carl Malmsten’s dining set Herrgården (The manor house), launched in 1958 as Ulfsparre, produced by Bodafors.
Fig. 8.3 The 1962 Ikea catalog presented “more of the timeless style,” in “an effort to make your home as current and modern after ten years as it is today.”

Fig. 8.4 “A beautiful exponent of the timeless style,” in the 1962 Ikea catalog, including the dining set Mårbacka by Bengt Ruda.
Fig. 8.5 As a highlight inside the cover in the 1962 catalog, Ikea promoted the bedroom suite *Hemsö* as “a nice old Swedish tradition that has become current again.”

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Fig. 8.6 White-lacquered furniture suites, building on a Gustavian tradition, were also popular from the time before World War I and throughout the 1920s.
Fig. 8.7 In 1960, *Allt i Hemmet* declared that “the old-fashioned is fashionable.”

Fig. 8.8 In 1962, *Allt i Hemmet* argued: “Do not believe everyone who says that [a home] must be standardized, uniform, drab, boring. It depends on the people.”
Fig. 8.9 Lisen, the first of the fictional inhabitants, had inherited a painted eighteenth-century vernacular cabinet that took pride of place in the living room, where her husband “rocked in a rocking chair, loving her and the peaceful vicarage atmosphere she had created in a one-bedroom apartment in a high-rise building.”

Fig. 8.10 “Here lives a courageous girl: it is bold to dare to be a romantic.”
Fig. 8.11 In 1959, a Swedish paint producer promoted a series of paints, called Blond Harmoni (Blonde Harmony), which “built on a Nordic color tradition, as we find for example in the light, airy interiors of Carl Larsson’s paintings and the Skogaholm manor house at Skansen—an expression of our longing for light in a country with very little sun.”

Fig. 8.12 Carl Larsson, Lathörnet. Ur Ett Hem (26 akvareller) (Lazy corner), 1895.
Figs. 8.13-14 The “old-fashioned, cozy atmosphere is a value that has disappeared with the serial production in our severely standardized homes.” To show the contrast, Allt i Hemmet copied Carl Larsson’s *Till en liten vira* in a modern setting with standardized furniture, but painted and decorated to evoke the “generous exuberance” of the artist’s home.
By 1960, Allt i Hemmet had begun a crusade against unimaginatively furnished living rooms. “We have really been trained to choose WHAT IS CORRECT . . . Why have we then become so boring and standardized?” the magazine wondered. “Neither the building contractor nor the outlet should decide where the couch shall be placed.” The headline was “So fine... and so boring”—and the “boring,” common way of furnishing was exactly what the housing board had used for its model living room in the 1960 God bostad, which included a seating group by the door and dining table by the window. Consequently, in addition to rearranging the furniture, Lena Larsson added color: a bright red shelf by the window that matched a bright red clock on the opposite wall.
Fig. 8.17 “Do something fun with the standard kitchen,” a 1960 cover of Allt i Hemmet.

Fig. 8.18 In 1962, Allt i Hemmet presented Rosa Horowitz’s idyllic version of Lennart Holm’s rational family kitchen published in 1957 (See fig. 2.19): “Is it not alive and cozy? Just look at the Carl Larsson-like colors, the happy green rag rug on the floor (which certainly will get dirty quickly) and the delightful workspace by the window.”
Fig. 8.19 In 1962, *Allt i Hemmet* featured a blue kitchen couch both on the cover and across the first spread of their 24-page feature about “Festive, cozy, distinct standard kitchens.”

Fig. 8.20 In their 1965 catalog, *Ikea* introduced the new pine seating group *Allmoge* as “obviously ideal in your *gillestuga* or summer cottage, but it is also perfectly fine for an intimate living room.”
Fig. 8.21 The first gillestuga presented in Allt i Hemmet was in an advertisement for clay building blocks in 1966, furnished with Ikea’s Allmoge: “Come and see how cozy we have made it!” The ad continued, “When building your own house, you can get an equally comfortable and useful basement. Build a gillestuga. TV room, hobby room, and why not a sauna, sewing room, or playroom?” These activities were also promoted in Allt i Hemmet.

Fig. 8.22 In 1965, Allt i Hemmet invited their readers to select their “dream room” from seven interiors with dining furniture arranged by the magazine. Carl Malmsten beat out his modern contemporaries Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobsen, and Eero Saarinen (Fig. 8.23).
Fig. 8.23 Eero Saarinen’s *Tulip* table and chairs featured in one of the “dream rooms” in 1965.

Fig. 8.24 As hundreds of thousands of people left their small farms in the countryside—and as suburbs developed at a rapid pace—*Allt i Hemmet* raised the debate about large-scale housing projects in the new suburbs in the early 1960s.
Chapter Nine: Dreaming of a Bedroom of One’s Own

Fig. 9.1 Revealing the expected gender roles of the time, *Allt i Hemmet* featured a story with three versions of the same bedroom in 1964.

Fig. 9.2 The promoted ideal was above all practical and flexible: use for personal adornment was acceptable only if combined with a multi-purpose workspace. The Co-op featured the same idea.
Fig. 9.3 “Soft carpets, woolly blankets, and a richly pleated, flowery curtain soften the tone of this strict and matter-of-factly modern room, in which even a man should feel comfortable.” IKEA, 1961.

Fig. 9.4 IKEA turned the second bedroom in the 1961 catalog into “mother’s lovely oasis of her own . . . It has the slight note of the [18]80s that we have come to appreciate more and more in our otherwise so sober and matter-of-fact time,” as the catalog explained the representation of soft textiles and the presence of flowers.
Fig. 9.5 “A bedroom does not have to be light and airy at all in its character for a woman to feel comfortable,” *Allt i Hemmet* stated in 1964.

Fig. 9.6 Under the heading “Laid-back and middle aged,” *Allt i Hemmet* further neutralized the gendering of the bedroom by suggesting it as a place where the parents could watch television, listen to records, read, and relax, while the living room was occupied by nice, though loud, teenagers.
Fig. 10.1 In 1964, *Allt i Hemnet* presented the results of its furniture investigation of Ikea and others as “sensational,” in a cover article titled “Is expensive furniture better than cheap furniture?”
Fig. 10.2 In 1964, *Allt i Hemmet* compared traditional furniture stores to new furniture sales models in five furnished living rooms. The difference in price ranged from an economical 2,777 kronor to 8,645 kronor for the most expensive room from an ordinary furniture shop, where Carl Malmsten had designed almost everything, along with some pieces by Danish furniture designers Kaare Klint and Hans J. Wegner, also rooted in a craft tradition.
Fig. 10.3 Of the three living rooms furnished with cheaper furniture, *Allt i Hemmet* favored Ikea’s interior as “fresh and young,” while dismissing the others as boring and hard to personalize. The Ikea room cost 2,777 kronor and was the cheapest in the 1964 comparison.
Fig. 11.1 Allt i Hemmet revealed a new slogan in 1965: “live youthfully... live economically” and arranged two living room interiors as a comparison: “Neat, locked-down, conventional for 7,500.”
Bo billigt

Ni är ung, ni är kär, ni håller på att sätta bo. Ni är att gratulera till en av livets allra trevligaste uppgifter.

Och nog tycker ni som vi att det första hemmet skall vara personligt, festligt, billigt. Inte svårskött och statusbetonat.

På de följande 20 sidorna redogör vi för hur fyra unga par sätter bo. Annorlunda, nyrenkt och oerhört billigt!

UNGT, RÖRLIGT, FRISKT FÖR 2.300


Fig. 11.2 Or “Youthful, flexible, fresh for 2,300.”
Figs. 11.3-4 Anders and Anna, a fictional couple in the 1965 feature, chose do-it-yourself furnishings.
Fig. 11.5 In 1967, Lena Larsson promoted a new furniture series designed with a home economics education in mind. The initiative to create buildable furniture came from Susanne Hallgren and Marta Nilsson (home economics teachers in Malmö), Annika Heijkenskjöld (director of Form/Design Center in Malmö), and designers Börge Lindau and Bo Lindekrantz. The Östbo furniture factory produced the boards from birch plywood. The Co-op sold the series under the name Byggjoker.

Fig. 11.6 In 1968, the Co-op launched the Spika (“to nail”) shelf constructed of plain, untreated particleboard with predrilled holes, which made it easy to nail together. Following an idea by architect Erik Karlström, his intern, architect Magnus Silfverhielm made the first prototype. The Spika series eventually sold 1.3 million units in the Co-op’s Domus stores all over Sweden.
Fig. 11.7 As Spika, Ike'a’s Pokus comprised modules of predrilled, untreated particleboard to mount and paint yourself. Designers were Charlotte Rude and Hjördis Olsson-Une.
Fig. 11.8 Dag and Daga, a couple in the 1965 setting-up-home feature, furnished their space almost completely with furniture found in the attics and basements of friends and family.

Fig. 11.9 “Ugly doors, boring furniture, what should we do with such things?,” Allt i Hemmet wonders in 1968.
Fig. 11.10 In Allt i Hemmet’s 1966 setting-up-home feature, the theme was “CHEAP, GOOD, YOUNG.” Under the heading “Young?” the jury described Ikea’s pine-dominated interior as “light and airy, where one has come a long way from status furniture and prestige thinking.”

Fig. 11.11 “Pine (Pinus silvestris) in our hearts,” in the 1968 Ikea catalog.
Fig. 11.12 “Do it yourself half-way. We live on the wall. . . . From now on warehouse shelves are music to my ears,” Lena Larsson concluded about this cheap, space-saving arrangement in 1967.

Fig. 11.13 Warehouse shelves in a living room setting with people lounging in low-seating furniture made of particleboard in the 1971 Ikea catalog.
Fig. 11.14 Ikea introduced the series *Pop 68* in lacquered particleboard as providing “an utterly groovy interior with blazing colors for ‘the beat generation’ and everyone who dares to think young, new, and cheeky.”
Fig. 11.15 “The young line in Domus. Laban, to lie down in, to jump on, to sit on, to fumble in, to grow in, to turn a somersault on, to be absolutely comfortable with.” Co-op advertisement in *Allt i Hemmet* in 1970.
Fig. 11.16 Furniture became floorbound and eventually just “a pile to socialize in.” *Modell 6+2* designed by Charlotte Rude and Hjördis Olsson-Une in the 1970 IKEA catalog.
Fig. 11.17 Multoman was designed by Jan Ahlin, Jan Dranger, Martin Eimerman, and Johan Huldt for Dux, which was part of the Bra bohag collaboration.

Fig. 11.18 The 1967–68 Bra bohag catalog began by exclaiming, “live youthfully and practically—live with ZIP!”
Fig. 11.19 In 1969, *Allt i Hemmet* turned the setting-up-home article into a challenge: “A young couple about to set up their home ponders the question: furniture or safari? Both are tempting. What is the best way to spend 6,500 kronor?”
Fig. 11.20 The expensive living room—without safari.

Fig. 11.21 The cheap living room—with safari.
Chapter Twelve:  
Conventional or Activity-Based Living Rooms and Bedrooms

Fig. 12.1 In 1967–68, Bra bohag described the conventional storage and shelving system *Bonett*, in French walnut or oak, as “a good example of Swedish quality production in the middle price range. Timeless, calm, suitable for every environment.”

Fig. 12.2 In addition to the particleboard *Spika* and *Laban* pieces, in 1969–70 the Co-op promoted the “sober, moderate design” of their walnut dining set with matching storage units called *Dominett*. 
Fig. 12.3 In the 1968–69 catalog, the Co-op featured a dining area with an unpainted particleboard table and a couple of Spika shelves instead of a sideboard. In contrast, the previous spread promoted a jacaranda dining set with sideboard, “intended as a more exclusive dining room.”
Fig. 12.4 The 1967 Ikea catalog invited its readers to vote for their favorite living room. The winner was the exclusive jacaranda room with its altar-like arrangement featuring a TV set.

Fig. 12.5 “Which living room do you like the most?” Living room of pine in the 1967 Ikea catalog.
Fig. 12.6 “There’s room for something more fun here!,” *Allt i Hemmet* suggests in 1969.

Fig. 12.7 “A fine little woodworking space in the living room can actually be quite decorative.”
Figs. 12.8-9 Room for hobbies, exercise, and home office instead of dining in the living room, as *Allt i Hemmet* suggested in the 1969 feature “There's room for something more fun here!”
Fig. 12.10 While *Allt i Hemmet* suggested different activities for the living room, IKEA introduced specific spaces: “activity room,” “hobby room,” along with a “garage” and “storage room,” in the 1970 catalog.
Fig. 12.11 “The new parlor?” Rather than provide solutions for combining relaxation, everyday life, and entertainment, Allt i Hemmet found that the furniture stores provided “a row of new, fine parlors. What else would they be, the prim and proper interiors shown in the furniture stores? Seating groups for the social life and jacaranda shelves for knickknacks. Hard-to-handle fabrics and fragile materials.”

Fig. 12.12 “Swedish tradition, high quality, timeless beauty,” a Carl Malmsten interior featured in Allt i Hemmet in 1970. The magazine’s underlying goals were in fact quite different from what their article seemed to present: “Don’t think that we mean a home should be built this way, with things that are completely linked to great designer names such as Carl Malmsten or Bruno Mathsson.”
“The old parlor.” To instill the values of modern living, *Allt i Hemmet* presented didactic comparisons between nineteenth-century parlors and interiors at the open-air museum Skansen.

Interior designer Stephan Gip emulated a vernacular everyday room to meet the same functions as more traditional examples. Yet, the magazine concluded, “one cannot just borrow from other times or use old ideals.”
Fig. 12.15 “The New Dream Bedroom” furnished with the Atmosfär series by Åke Hassbjörn. He used the measurements of a standard bedroom of 4.2 x 3 meters and created a complete environment of modules for Dux, arranging them into a multi-activity room for Bra bohag’s 1965–66 catalog.

Fig. 12.16 Atmosfär furnishings could provide for “work, rest, recreation, and sleep—the parents’ own antistress room,” Bra bohag stated in their 1966–67 catalog.
Fig. 12.17 For the 1968 Ikea catalog, Gillis Lundgren had created *Las Vegas*, “refreshing, young furnishing” with beds fit into a wall-mounted panel that could be combined with modules such as a dressing table.

Fig. 12.18 By 1970, also the Co-op featured beds in a wall arrangement with matching green fabric surrounded by pine shelves and cabinets, called *Louisiana*. 
Fig. 12.19 The bedroom as a “place for living, not just for sleeping.” Advertisement in *Allt i hemmet* 1969.
Fig. 12.20 “Something more than just a bedroom—a place to hang out in both day and night,” Ikea stated in 1970.

Fig. 12.21 “A woman: ‘We would have a mirror in the ceiling—if we just dared to,’” Marianne Fredriksson reported in *Allt i Hemmet* in 1970.
Chapter Thirteen:
A Rustic Air of Pine in the Kitchen, Simplification, and Changeability

Fig. 13.1 “The pleasure of dining in the kitchen.” Setting the tone for this 1968 feature, the first interior was described as “rustic” and inspired by unpretentious tavern restaurants. Light pine paneling completely covered the walls, along with, wine bottles, vernacular ceramics in the pine shelf, and brown stoneware plates on the table.
Fig. 13.2 In 1970, the Co-op advertised their rustic dining area as a “place to gather and socialize, unpretentiously but cordially.”
Fig. 13.3 The Co-op followed the stick-back tradition in their blue and yellow dining area with white-lacquered stick-back couch and chairs. A handwoven rag rug on the floor resembled one seen in the Larsson house, contributing to what the 1967–68 catalog suggested was "the right, cozy atmosphere."
Fig. 13.4 “Add color to [your] kitchen and dining area!” Ikea stated in the 1968 catalog.

Fig. 13.5 “Swedish blondness and a Carl Larsson atmosphere with secure tradition in the back!” Interiors from Allt i Hemmet’s 1968 feature, “The pleasure of dining in the kitchen.”
Fig. 13.6 Camera footage was used to study two adults working in different kitchen designs to help create a new kitchen standard for 1970.
Fig. 13.7 In 1970, Husqvarna promoted the color-coordinated kitchen, described as a whole “environment.” A microwave oven, which was extremely unusual in Sweden at the time, and The Times add to the kitchen’s glamorous flair, which broke with the utilitarian look of a Swedish standard kitchen.

Fig. 13.8 Allt i Hemmet used the Larsson images to inspire the creation of a personal home for everyday life free from the preoccupation with status, and to convey a sense of comfort and security.
In 1976, the Consumer Agency published the setting-up-home brochure *Bosättningsråd* for the first time since 1965. The drawing of an airy living room on the cover of the brochure resembled the interiors of *Allt i Hemmet*, with simple warehouse shelving rather than the high-grade woods seen in the furniture catalogs. Further adding to the impression of spaciousness, there was no seating group, only a round table with three lightweight wooden armchairs, an easily moveable wicker chair by the stereo, and a daybed with large pillows instead of a conventional sofa. A knitting project in a basket and the newspaper left on the daybed added to the impression of a relaxed atmosphere created for both children and adults.
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