

THE UPPSALA CASE

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The management of Uppsala University together with the state property owner Akademiska Hus has initiated “Campus Plan 2050”, a vision that will guide the long-term development. Recently, Uppsala University also adopted a new policy document for sustainability, outlining a program and action plan for how the university through research, education and collaboration with other regional societal actors will contribute to a more sustainable world¹. In particular, Uppsala University and Uppsala municipality (Uppsala kommun) have started a partnership targeted on sustainable urban planning.

Within LBC we work on two pilot cases. The first case is to work out various development scenarios of the Polacksbacken campus, a campus area which, together with the surrounding rapidly growing townships, will be a site for major change in the coming decades. Closely connected, yet separate, is to create a physical meeting & maker space in the center of Uppsala at Gamla Torget. This space will act as a lab and prototyped space for participatory and sustainable campus/urban development in Uppsala during 2017.

Uppsala University was founded in 1477, and today teaching and research is carried out in three disciplinary domains; (i) the humanities and social sciences, (ii) medicine and pharmacy, and (iii) natural sciences and engineering. The total number of students is ~41 500, which corresponds to ~23 000 full-time students (77% at Bachelor level and 23% at Master level). Additionally, there are ~2 400 PhD students, ~1 500 teachers and ~500 professors. The university is spread in the western city parts stretching a nearly 3 km distance with the Polacksbacken campus in the south and the Ekonomikum campus in the north. As of 2013, Uppsala University also has a campus at Gotland, the former University College Gotland.

2. PILOT CASES

2.1 The Polacksbacken campus area: The Polacksbacken campus (Figures 1 and 2) is constituted of two parts; a set of former military barracks and the Ångström Laboratory where the first part was erected in the mid-90s. Today, the barracks house the Department of Information Technology (ITC) while the Ångström Laboratory houses the Department of Physics, the Department of Mathematics, the Department of Engineering Sciences, and the Department of Chemistry – Ångström Laboratory. Yet, the Polacksbacken campus area will undergo major changes in the next years as a forth part (Ettapp 4) of the Ångström Laboratory will be constructed on the parking area north of the laboratory. This building will accommodate the ITC, and with this comes the opportunity to redesign the old military area.

¹ The policy documents (only available in Swedish) can be found here:

<http://www.uu.se/student/studentnyheter/artikel/?id=5952&typ=artikel&area=2&lang=sv>

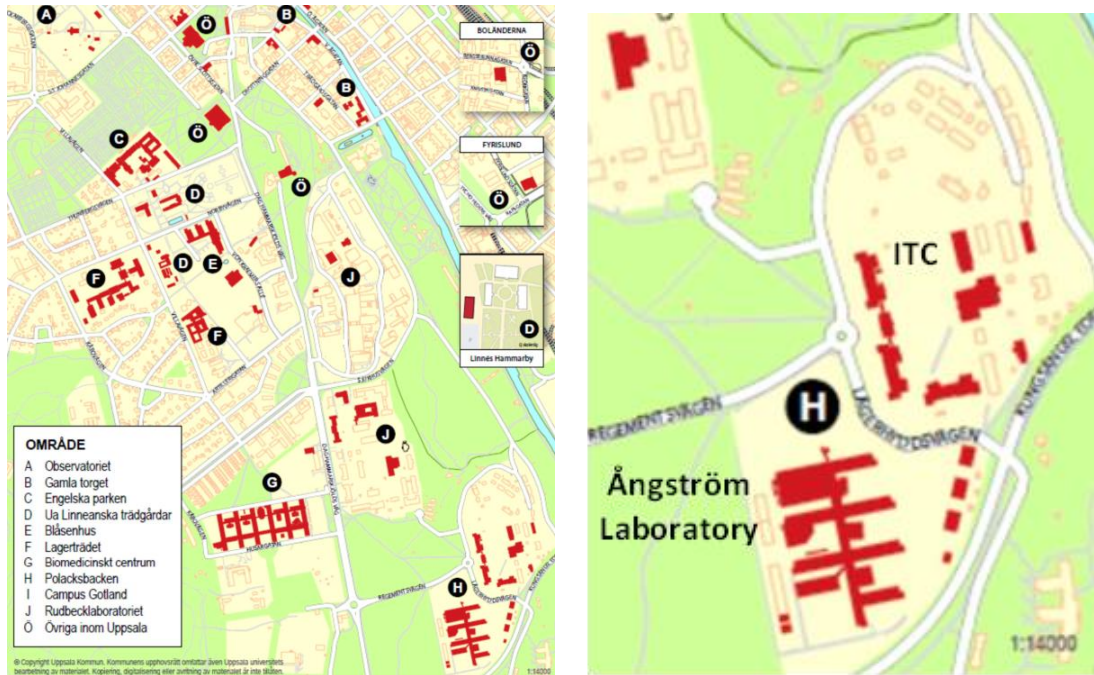


Figure 1: A map of the southwest parts of Uppsala with Uppsala University campus locations displayed, and a detailed map of the Polacksbacken campus area. The new ITC building will be built where the “H” is written.



Figure 2: (A) The Polacksbacken campus with the Ångström Laboratory to the right and ITC (located in the former barracks) to the left. The Polacksbacken meadow in the foreground. (B) A vision image of the new ITC building planned at the Polacksbacken area in front of the Ångström Laboratory (visible in the background).

The construction of the new ITC building will start in spring 2017 and be completed in 2020. The transformation of the Polacksbacken campus, particularly in the context of the intensive urban development in its vicinity, is a pilot case of the UU node of LBC. What activities could be involved in the old barracks after the ITC has moved to their new premises? In particular, how can the university be an active partner in the future urban context?

Polacksbacken is located 2.5 km south of the city center and is easily reached by public transportation and bike. Upcoming development of the Ulleråker township (see below) requires drastic enhancement of the public transportation, and Uppsala municipality recently received financial support from the Swedish state for a public transportation upgrade along the “kunskapsstråket” (the “knowledge path”) running from the city center passing the University hospital (Akademiska sjukhuset), the Biomedical Center (BMC), Uppsala Science Park, the Polacksbacken campus and ending at the Swedish Agricultural University (SLU).

2.2 The Sustainability Hub: In 2015, inspired by the “Green-office movement” that currently is spreading across universities in Europe, and encouraged by Uppsala University’s recent adoption of a Program and Action Plan for Sustainability, students and staff at CEMUS developed a proposal for creating a student-led and staff-supported *Sustainability Hub* in Uppsala. The hub is envisioned to act as a network and platform for students and staff to collaboratively improve the sustainability of the university.

Building on the proposal of a Sustainability Hub, and expanding it to address some of the broader questions and approaches at the core of the LBC-project, the idea of prototyping a physical space and forum for participatory and sustainable campus/urban development in Uppsala during 2017 as a part of the LBC project, was born.

In short, the physical space would:

- act as a meeting & maker space that encourages critical conversation and creative action for a more sustainable and participatory development and design of Uppsala University’s campus areas in Uppsala.
- be open to students, researchers, general public and various regional actors, with resources and content to be able to inspire critical thinking and catalyze social, ecological and technological innovation for sustainability.
- be a 1-year experiment – an attempt to co-create a space in the center of Uppsala that can act as a prototype and pilot that can be tested and studied as a part of the LBC project, with the ambition to evaluate the value of such spaces in a more long-term perspective.
- facilitate processes and develop activities and methods that explore new ways in which the education and research at Uppsala University can have an impact on how campus areas and the region of Uppsala develops (and vice versa).



Figure 3: The room and physical space that has been made available, located in the center of Uppsala, along the Fyris river and in the same building that soon will house the Department of Government at UU.

3. URBAN DEVELOPMENT AROUND THE POLACKSBACKEN AREA

Uppsala is one of the most rapidly growing larger towns in Sweden, and during 2015 Uppsala municipality grew with 2764 persons (a population growth of 1.3%). The new housing needed for the population growth is primarily built within existing city boundaries so as to counter suburbanization on the surrounding lands, one of the most fertile lands in Sweden. Today, Uppsala town has approximately 160 000 inhabitants while the municipality has about 210 000 inhabitants. Thus, at the same time as Uppsala is the fourth largest town in Sweden, Uppsala municipality is the largest country-side municipality with approximately 50 000 people living outside the central city.

Polacksbacken is located at the nexus between two rapidly expanding urban areas; Södra staden (South town) and Kungsängen, where the latter connects to both the city center and Främre Boländerna, an industrial township that will be transformed in the decades to come. Södra staden is the overarching name of a larger development area that includes a series of townships that are under construction and/or at planning stage. It is postulated that Södra staden in year 2050 will have approximately 25 000 new apartments and some 60 000 more inhabitants when compared to today. The two townships in Södra staden with close contact to the Polacksbacken campus are the Ulleråker and Rosendal areas. The first is a 1 km² area located directly to the south of Polacksbacken which is planned for ~7 000 new apartments. For a visionary description of the future urban development directly south of the Ångström Laboratory see Figure 4 below. The second township in the vicinity is Rosendal, a new township planned for ~5 000 apartments. The construction of this township has been ongoing for approximately two years.

The development of the Polacksbacken campus area, alongside the neighboring new townships, encompasses a series of challenging issues related to ecological, environmental, social, cultural as well as economic sustainability.

Polacksbacken is surrounded by three recreational areas which in the municipal plan for parks and green spaces are found to be of very high value.² These are Kronåsen and Geijersdalen, the Kronparken forest, and the Polacksbacken meadow. The Polacksbacken area is situated on and next to the Kronåsen glacial till hill which provides for the major ground water supply of Uppsala town. Contamination of the ground water with pollutants would have very serious effects and be extremely costly. Today, the Kronåsen hill and the Geijersdalen (Geijer’s valley) is a 10 ha nature preserve, with the Gula stigen (the “Yellow path”), an approximately 10 km hiking trail, having its start at the north end of the Kronåsen hill (see Figure 5). The Kronparken forest, which is merely 25 ha, is one of the oldest forests in Sweden, and it connects the City Forest (Stadsskogen) of 100 ha with the Fyris river and Årike Fyris (a nature reserve along the river banks south of Uppsala).



Visionsbild som visar den nya bron över Kungsängsleden med stomlinje för kollektivtrafiken söderut i Ulleråker. Bron och den nya kollektivtrafikgatan ansluter till Ulleråkersvägen som syns i bilden, med Asylområdet i fonden. Illustration EGA Erik Giudice Architects.

Figure 4: The view from the fourth floor of the Ångström Laboratory toward Ulleråker (a former mental hospital area) as of May 2016, and the vision in the Ulleråker program of Uppsala municipality.



Figure 5: The north start of Gula stigen (the “Yellow path”), and an information board at the entrance of the Kronparken forest.

² Parkplan för Uppsala stad (Plans for parks in Uppsala city), Uppsala kommun, 2014.