House 143 in the southern quarter – tracing households and domestic space in late 18th century Turku[1]

Panu Savolainen

In 1769, tailor Johan Morberg purchased House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter (Södra Qwarteret) in Turku (Åbo[2]). Morberg soon dismantled all the existing buildings and built a new housing complex on the plot. The latter half of the 18th century was an era of rapid population growth in Turku (figure 1), which was the most prominent town of the Eastern part of the Kingdom of Sweden, nowadays Finland. Many house owners of the town reacted to the influx of new tenants from the countryside by building tenant houses on vacant space on their plots. Many of them, including Morberg's household, also replaced the modest and outdated main buildings with new ones, with two floors, and new apartment-like house plans.

This article examines the everyday living, domestic architecture, and household compositions in late 18th century Sweden through one case: House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter in Turku. My intention is to explore the grass roots of the physical space and domestic architecture of the house, and at the same time examine the changing constellations of owner and tenant households between 1770–1820. This period, as mentioned, was an era of rapid growth of the town, and the fifty year period offers an excellent time window to explore how the rapidly growing urban population packed into the dwellings of Turku. Exploring simultaneously the domestic space and the inhabitants of a single town house during a course of

[1] This article is based on a conference presentation given at the ESSCH conference in Vienna (2014). I, then an early-stage doctoral candidate, was invited to give a presentation by Dag Lindström to session *Das Haus*, chaired by Lindström.

[2] Turku, also known as *Åbo* as its Swedish name, is located on the western coast of Finland, but in the period of research was the fourth town of Sweden and the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland, subsumed under the Russian sovereignty in the pact of Hamina in 1809.

five decades, this study grasps the inter-relation of social and spatial aspects in the shaping of early modern households. It offers a methodological standpoint on the intricate cross-reading of spatial and demographic historical sources, similar to the recent work by Dag Lindström and Göran Tagesson.[3]

The method of selection of the case for this study was inspired by Alain Corbin's biography on Louis-François Pinagot, which he chose as the main figure of his research by pointing his finger haphazardly on a row of a census book.[4] In the framework of this article this operation brought into light a very typical craftsman's house in a late 18th century Swedish town. Therefore, the scrutiny of House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter opens a window to a larger view of domestic architecture and living, and finally, into the enigmatic concept of the *household*.

Figure 1. The town of Turku in a survey from 1808 by Johan Tillberg (National Archives of Finland) with Southern Quarter 143 highlighted.

In recent decades, the concepts and historical phenomenon of the household have been studied extensively from various angles. In Sweden, recent studies by Dag Lindström and Göran Tagesson, among others, have unveiled a number of new approaches to examining the household and its spatial configurations through a cross-reading of archaeological and historical material.

[3] Dag Lindström & Göran Tagesson, "Hus och hushåll i den tidigmoderna staden: Ett metodpaket," *Bebyggelsehistorisk tidskrift 85* (2023) p. 30–49.
[4] Alain Corbin, *Le monde retrouvé de Louis-François Pinagot, sur les traces d'un inconnu, 1798–1876* (Paris 1998).

Similarly, the concept of the household, according to Lindström, becomes much more complex, vague and rich when approached critically through the close reading of sources.[5]

The most prominent more distant historiography of household studies lies in the work of the *Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure* and its leader Peter Laslett in the 1960s and 1970s. The temporal and spatial scope of the *Cambridge Group* was colossal, thriving to achieve to a global synthesis of medieval and early modern social structures.[6] The group developed a tripartite tool to chart evidence of households in various times, geographical regions, and sources. The three criteria for a *household* were (1) the kinship criterion, meaning family ties, (2) the functional criterion, meaning sharing of the household and sometimes professional activities, and (3) the locational criterion, meaning that household members shared the domestic space. Laslett crystallized the last criterion inter alia with the example "they slept habitually under the same roof".[7]

However, the Cambridge group, as well as subsequent studies have scarcely explored the import of physical space to the domestic social organisation. Regardless of the presence of spatial aspects of the locational criterion, extant physical spaces or documentary material of past houses have been studied to an insignificant extent compared to the demographic sources. Although the import of physical space to the composition of households has also recently been foregrounded, there are few studies on households devoted to both their material and social aspects, and here the work of Tagesson and Lindström in the 2010s and 2020s forms a remarkable group of new approaches.[8] The difficulty lies in the qualitative disparity of the historical sources describing the social and the material aspects of life. The nature of demographic sources diverges completely from the documents describing domestic spaces and the material settings of past everyday life. The most demanding task is to trace the spatial contours of past people to relate past individuals and groups to specific historically reconstructed rooms, buildings or physical spaces in general.

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[5] See especially Dag Lindström & Göran Tagesson, "On spatializing history: The household as spatial unit in Early Modern Swedish towns," *META* (2015) p. 47–60; Dag Lindström, "Families and Households, Tenants and Lodgers: Cohabitation in an Early Modern Swedish Town, Linköping 1750–1800", *Journal of Family History* 45:2 (2020), p. 228–249; Dag Lindström, Alida Clemente & Jon Stobart (eds.), *Micro-geographies of the Western City: c. 1750–1900* (New York & London 2020); Dag Lindström & Göran Tagesson, "Spaces for comfort, seclusion and privacy in a Swedish eighteenth-century town", in Sari Nauman & Helle Vogt (eds.), *Private/Public in 18th Century Scandinavia*, (London 2021) p. 141–162.

[6] Peter Laslett (ed.), *Household and family in past time* (Cambridge 1972).

[7] Peter Laslett, "Introduction", in Peter Laslett (ed.), *Household and family in past time* (Cambridge 1972) p. 25.

[8] For earlier studies that include both aspects, see the works in note 5, and e.g. Hannah Barker & Jane Hamlett, "Living above the Shop: Home, Business, and Family in the English Industrial Revolution," *Journal of Family History*, 35 (2010) p. 311–328; Peter Earle, *The Making of English Middle Class* (London 1989) p. 210–218, 290–301. For similar approaches on the modern period, see Roderick. J. Lawrence, "Integrating Architectural, Social and Housing History", *Urban History* 19 (1992) p. 39–63. The evolution of early modern vernacular architecture has been, on the contrary, examined widely in architectural history, but without the inclusion of the social framework.

A turn in the 2010s in the study of households and domestic social structures highlights the performing aspects of household, at same time preferring the concept a "house", instead of a "household".[9] Along with the said turn the role and meaning of spatial arrangements, physical and social spatiality, becomes more and more substantive in the understanding of the forming of early modern urban household.[10] Discussion on the difference of a *houseful* and a *household* has equally evoked a vivid debate for the documentary evidence on domestic units, at times presumed to represent housefuls instead of households.[10] As I will argue throughout this paper, both the evidence of the materiality and social aspects of house are needed to understand early modern households comprehensively. The aspects of physical space in the shaping of households seem to matter particularly in towns, where the living density was higher and the domestic architecture more complex and often constrained by the spatial design in conditions of scarcity of space.

Demographic source material: poll tax records

In the examination of early modern households, it is essential to be deeply aware of the nature and origins of the documentary evidence. As it has been stated, "to answer the question what exactly is meant [in the documentary record] by the terms family and household the only appropriate response would be an appeal to the past persons who created that evidence."[11] There is always a rupture, a transition, between past individuals and their documentary representation, and several studies have underlined the instrumental nature of the concept of the *household*. The concept is deemed to represent more an ideal of the census officials than the social reality under the early modern roofs.

In this study, I use two separate categories of documentary evidence, fire insurance policies and poll tax records.[12] In respect to the reliability and nature of both types of documentary evidence, minute aspects on early modern houses

[9] Joachim Eibach, "Das offene Haus. Kommunikative Praxis im sozialen Nahraum der europäischen Frühen Neuzeit", *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 38 (2011) p. 621–664.

[10] About the problem from various approaches, see e.g. Laslett (1972) p. 34–39, 159–166; Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500–1914* (London 1980) p. 27–38; John Hajnal, "Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation systems", in Richard Wall, Jean Robin & Peter Laslett (eds.), *Family forms in historic Europe* (Cambridge 1983) p. 99–104. Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-century England, Household, kinship and patronage* (Cambridge 2001) p. 10. From the viewpoint of Finland, a comprehensive study on the subject is Tiina Miettinen, *Ihanteista irrallaan, Hämeen maaseudun nainen osana perhettä ja asiakirjoja 1600-luvun alusta 1800-luvun alkuun* (Tampere 2012) p. 20–23, 31–41 (with a short abstract in English).

[11] Laslett 1972, p. 24.

[12] The Fire Insurances: Turku City Archives, "maistraatin alaisten toimielinten arkisto, palovakuutusasiakirjat (Fire Insurance Policies), K16–K18". The Censuses: The National Archives of Finland, The Collection of Provincial accounts (Läänintilit) –1809; The Provincial Archives of Turku, The Census Records (henkikirjat) of the Provincial Office (Lääninkonttori) 1809–.

such as information about the living density are possible to derive from the combination of the data.

The documentary evidence on social structures of the households in this article is based on poll tax records (*mantalslängderna* in Swedish). From 1765 onwards, all inhabitants of the kingdom of Sweden had to be listed in these records, also children under 15 and elderly persons over 65 years old, even though they were exempted from the tax itself. The documents list all the dwellers according to household, profession and address. A comprehensive record of the population that occupied a certain plot or house is thus available from the 1760s onwards. In the late 18th century, the records were compiled according to the announcement of the house owner about the souls living on their plot. The reliability of the announcements has been questioned constantly in the Swedish and the Finnish literature.

In Sweden, there is also another source that describes the population: house records kept by the parishes (*husförhörslängder* in Swedish). Both records give somewhat approximate information about the composition of households. It has also been shown in earlier studies that there is contradictory information regarding the population and households in poll tax records and parish records.[13] This may be explained simply by the fact that household compositions were dynamic, messy and relatively difficult to keep track of by local priests and the municipal officers, and even by the household members themselves. However, this question on source criticism also deserves to be mirrored through the inescapable idea that perhaps in some cases there never was any distinct and uncontradictory "reality" about who belonged to a certain household. In this article, I concentrate on the information of the poll tax records, which give yearly information on households and include children as well, and therefore give a richer picture on the composition of households.

Architectural source material: fire insurance policies

Since early modern houses are rarely preserved to the present day, and even the extant ones have invariably witnessed heavy alterations over the centuries, the best picture of historical built environments is often grounded on architectural-historical sources. Historians have extensively used architectural drawings, court records, diaries and probate inventories to examine early modern spaces.[14] Besides the architectural history, the focus has been set on the experiential, lived

[13] See e.g. Happonen, *Kaksi Todellisuutta?*

[14] For some representative studies, see Barker & Hamlett (2010); Fiona Williamsson, "Space and the City, Gender Identities in seventeenth-century Norwich", *Cultural and Social History* 9:2 (2012) p. 169–185; Paula Hohti, "Domestic space and identity: artisans, shopkeepers and traders in sixteenth-century Siena", *Urban History* 37:3 (2010) p. 372–385; Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean & Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600–1750* (London & New York 2004); Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors. At Home in Georgian England* (Yale 2009).

and social dimension of space, while the physical patterns and arrangements have taken a back seat.[15]

In the case of Turku, elaborate spatial reconstructions of the lost materiality can be drawn from early modern documentary evidence, including fire insurance policies and other accurate building surveys. The town of Turku was almost completely destroyed in a calamitous fire in 1827, including the house under scrutiny in this article.[16] The materiality of the house is nevertheless preserved in a textual description, thanks to a fire insurance document. The house owner, cobbler Matts Åberg insured his house in October 1794, and the meticulous description allows an accurate reconstruction of the house plan (figure 2).[17]

If willing to insure their buildings, the house owners of the late 18th century Sweden were obliged to write a minute description of their house, mentioning each part and the measurements of the shell and the immovable furnishings. The descriptions were inspected by a survey made of the house and then revised by local agents of the Royal insurance fund that were commonly officials from the city administrative court. They reframed the descriptions for the final approval of the insurance applications in the company headquarters in Stockholm.[18]

The simultaneous examination of the two separate texts, made by the house owner and the city officials, enables the reconstruction of elaborate floor plans of the late 18th century houses. The method may be pictured as a reverse operation of the process where the house owners and city officials turned the material reality they saw into textual descriptions over two hundred years ago. The early fire insurance documents are valuable sources describing the material culture of the houses: their "textual materiality" allows the minute enquiry of a material world we have lost in the fire of 1827.

The use of architectural evidence, such as drawings or preserved houses, has been criticised for its tendency to draw overly advanced assumptions on the social history of houses and households.[19] Drawings and other figurative documents, as well as preserved domestic architecture, usually represent the architectural intentions of domestic ideals of the élite. Thus, they are not suitable for the study of the majority of early modern urban population who had to find their space in incidental circumstances.[20] On the contrary, inventories and textual descriptions represent the result of stratifications and modifications, the reality of the urban fabric under constant transformation, instead of the builders' or

[15] For studies concentrating on physical patterns, see for example Frank E. Brown, "Continuity and Change in the Urban House: Developments in Domestic Space Organisation in Seventeenth-Century London", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28:3 (1986) p. 558–590; Overton et al. (eds.), (2004) p. 121–136; Ursula Priestley & P. J. Corfield, "Rooms and room use in Norwich housing, 1580–1730", *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 16 (1982) p. 93–123.
[16] Svante Dahlström, *Åbo Brand 1827* (Åbo 1929).
[17] Turku City Archives, Fire Insurance Policies K16, 23.10.1794.
[18] Karl Åmark, *Almänna brandförsäkringsverket 1782–1932, Minneskrift* (Stockholm 1932).
[19] Tim Meldrum, "Domestic service, privacy and the eighteenth-century metropolitan household", *Urban History* 26:1 (1999) p. 27–39.
[20] Meldrum (1999) p. 37.

architects' intentions and ideals. Inventories and similar documents were also drawn more equivalently of any house, regardless of the wealth and status of its possessor. Although the fire insurances were also centred on the more affluent half of the house owners, numerous examples of lower-class houses are represented in the records.[21]

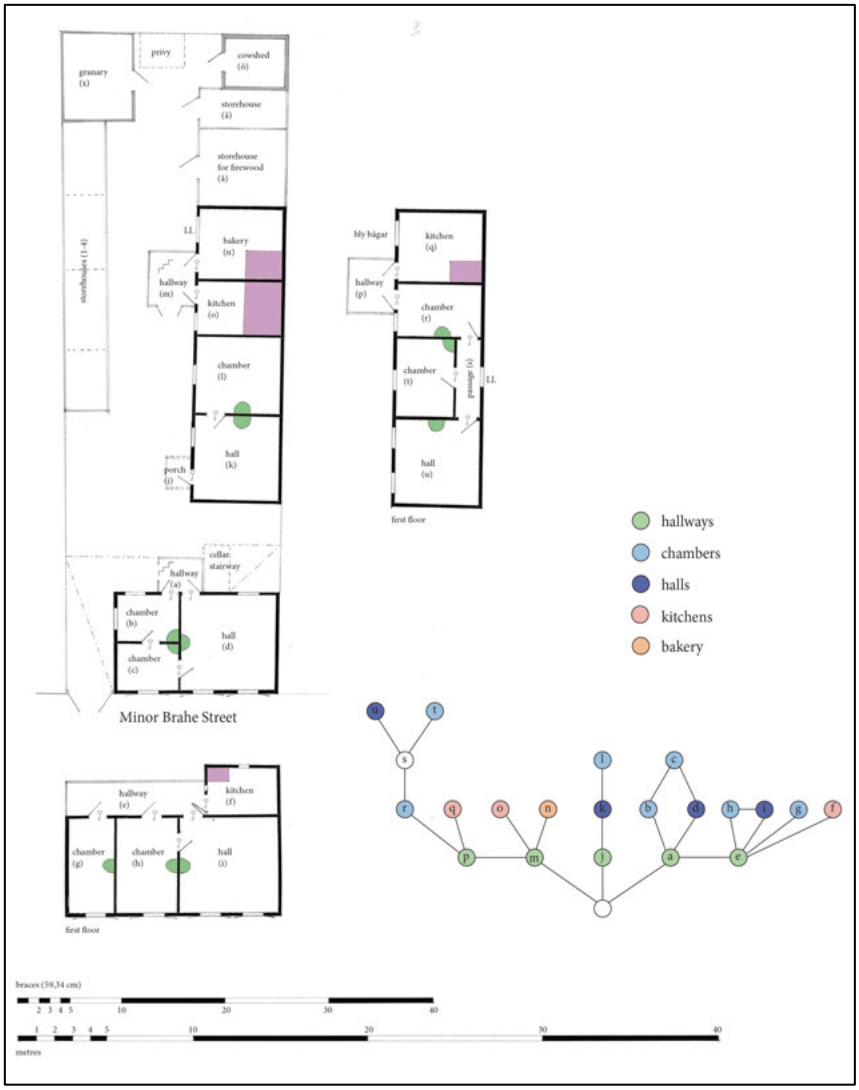

Figure 2. Reconstruction of Southern Quarter 143 house built in 1769 and destroyed in The Great Fire of Turku 1827. The Reconstruction is based on a Fire Policy Insurance from 1794. Drawing: Author.

[21] Panu Savolainen, *Tirkistelyä förmaakeihin ja ylishuoneisiin* (Turku 2014) p. 14–15. Approximately 40% of the fire insurances applied in Turku in 1785–1807 were of houses possessed by craftsmen and 5% by workmen. Turku City Archives, Fire Insurance Policies K16–K18.

Late 18th century domestic architecture in Turku

Turku, located on the southeastern cost of Finland, was the fourth largest town of Sweden until Finland was subsumed under Russian authority in 1809. At the end of the Swedish era (–1809), Turku was one of the most important towns in 18th century Sweden, with over 10,000 inhabitants, a university, episcopal see, and governmental institutions.[22] During the last decades of the 18th century, the urban area had grown far beyond its medieval core. The most affluent houses were in the oldest town core and along the strands of the river Aura (figure 1).

House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter (Södra Qwarteret) was situated along *Minor Brahe Street*, initially a main medieval street, in the fringe area of Turku city centre. It offers an example to the flexibility of houses under a constant flux of moving households in the late 18th and the early 19th century Turku. The plot comprised of a two-story building, built in 1769, and outbuildings in the rear of the plot. The narrow plot was built as densely as the available space and the local wooden construction technique permitted (figure 2). In 1770–1820 the house was owned by five different persons. The most long-lasting possessor of the plot from the 1790s to 1810s was the household of Matts Åberg, a local cobbler.[23] The house owners in the neighbourhood consisted of lower bourgeoisie, craftsmen and lower gentry.

The general outlines of the evolution of the early modern domestic space are conventionally pictured as a process from multi-purpose rooms towards the specialization of room functions.[24] This spatial progression is conventionally related to the growth of privacy and the emergence of "separated spheres". The 19th century dwelling, gathering around the nuclear family, is conventionally seen as a culmination of this evolution of domesticity.[25] At grass roots level, the reality in however always more complex.

The buildings of the late 18th century Turku consisted mainly of single apartment houses. The naming of rooms in the fire insurance policies is relatively unequivocal and follows a schematic manner. The majority, over two thirds, of the rooms were called simply chambers ("kammare" in Swedish), while one of the rooms in apartments consisting of two or more rooms was always a hall ("sal"). In more affluent houses there were also parlour ("förmak"), as a third but already rare category of rooms. Additionally, bed chambers ("säng kammare") occurred sometimes. Besides kitchens ("kök") and bakehouses ("bagare stufwa"), only rarely do the insurance documents mention any other categories

[22] Oscar Nikula, *Åbo Stads historia 1721–1809* (Åbo 1970).
[23] The National Archives of Finland, The Collection of Provincial accounts (Läänintilit) –1809; The Provincial Archives of Turku, KA7665, 889–992 (1771); KA7690, 742–821 (1776); KA7716, 821–913 (1781); KA7741, 747–824 (1786); KA7768, 913–1019 (1791); KA7792, 714–846 (1796); KA7820, 735–872 (1801); KA7852, 817–962 (1806); The Census Records (henkikirjat) of the Provincial Office (Lääninkonttori) 1809–, T:3 (1811); T:8 (1816); T:13 (1821).
[24] See e.g. Aurélien Davrius, *Jacques-François Blondel, architecte des Lumières* (Paris 2018).
[25] Michel Perrot, *A History of Private Life 4* (init. Paris 1987, Harvard 1990) p. 341–357.

of rooms, such as servant"s rooms ("piga kammare", "dräng kammare", "dräng stufwa") and workshops ("verkstad").[26]

A typical middling house comprised an apartment of hall ("sal") and one or two chambers ("kammare"), often also a kitchen ("kök") and variable number of outbuildings ("uthus"). The upper-class houses often followed a symmetrical composition of a central hall with a few chambers around. The most impressive residences, with over six rooms, consisted normally of a hall and a parlour ("förmak") next to each other, and a few rooms on their sides (figure 3).

Towards the end of the 18th century the number of houses containing multiple separate apartments increased. The rapid growth of the urban population in the second half of the century induced the emergence of a new building type, a two-story tenement. Tenements that ordinarily comprised single or double room apartments were typically built in the back yards of house owners' single-family houses. Tenement blocks, familiar already in 17th century London, did not yet however exist.

House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter exhibits the population growth and the transformation of domestic architecture in the second half of the 18th century. The most interesting feature of the house is the spatial flexibility of the composition of the rooms. The house consisted of seven chambers and four halls (figure 2). Rooms a-i could be used as a two-storey apartment of a large household, or the same rooms may have been split into three (*b-d, g, h-i*) or even more separate dwellings when the kitchen was shared. Especially interesting is the solution for the rooms *r-u*, where the corridors would have been irrelevant if the separate use of as many rooms as possible had not been intended. All kitchens and the bakehouse were separate from the domestic rooms. There is no evidence that the original design intended flexible uses, but the building itself gives the impression that this was taken into account.

The fire insurance documents also reveal the materiality of domestic spaces, they reveal the changing habits of the naming and changing functions of rooms. It may be questioned, whether the architectural drawings of the corresponding era, with their minute differentiation of room functions, represent the domestic ideal rather than reality. In general, the use and differentiation of rooms is often considered static. Nevertheless, room functions in one single house may have varied largely, according to the occupants' needs and habits.[27] The careful reading of the fire insurance documents also indicates, that the case-sensitive perception of the draftsmen of the insurance companies may explain the extent of the differentiation in the room naming. The room functions depended, not only on temporal alterations, but also on the individual comprehension and sense on

[26] Savolainen (2014) p. 44–65. Turku City Archives, Fire Insurance Policies K16–K18.

[27] For the problems on the information of the textual representations of spatial functions, see e.g. Barker & Hamlett (2010) p. 313–314; John Bedell, "Archaeology and Probate Inventories in the study of Eighteenth-century Life", *Journal of Interdisciplinary history*, 31:2 (2000) p. 223–245. Overton et al. (eds.), (2004) p. 15–16, 121–122.

domestic space. Thus, the naming of the rooms can hardly represent the conventions of the different households who inhabited the houses and rooms.

Figure 3. Typical house plans from late 18th century Turku. Reconstructions are based on Fire policy insurances. Drawings: Author.

However, as the insurance documents seem to be voiceless as they unveil the detailed differentiate functions of domestic spatiality, it is even more interesting when designated room uses appear in the descriptions. The location of servants' accommodation in the houses reveals some interesting features. In more affluent houses, male servants' chambers were located in separate buildings, apart from

other housing usually along with the outbuildings and bakehouses and were mentioned more frequently despite that male servants were far fewer than female servants. The female servants' rooms were designated only on a very few of the over 170 insured houses.[28] It is obvious that many of the rooms simply called "chambers" were used by servants, but not in the manner that they would have been conceived unequivocally their "domain", as the male servants' chambers were in the backyards.

An insurance description from 1792 offers an interesting glimpse into the perception and sensitivity concerning the room uses. *Mademoiselle* Christina Krook described (the document was written by herself), that the first floor of her house comprised of a hall, parlour, bed chamber, cabinet and a cupboard, an ideal set of rooms in the 18th century classicistic domestic architecture. As a single example of an exquisite domestic space among over 170 insurance descriptions of Turku, it represents the level of sensitivity of the author of its description more than the exceptionality of the interior in question. The very same insurance policy is drawn minutely, mentioning details of the interior and construction that lack in the majority of the insurance descriptions. In the city officials' version, the parlour, bed chamber cabinet and cupboard were simply named "chambers".[29]

At times the room naming and house plans also exhibit the relation between work and domesticity. The instructions of the fire insurance fund demanded to classify the rooms for housing ("bonings rum") and working ("arbets rum") in the insurance descriptions. Despite of this requirement, workshops or offices seldom occur in the insurance descriptions.[30] Anyway, it is self-evident that several rooms that belonged to the domestic apartments and were named "chambers", were obviously used for crafting and trading. In House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter the two separate entrances to the rooms *b-d* probably indicate the intention to keep one of the downstairs chambers as a workshop.

The most revealing features of the domestic space from the perspective of households are not the functions of separate rooms, but rather the constraints and permeabilities of the house plan. To highlight the meaning of the *structure* of space, instead of its *functions*, the subsequent section explores the relation of households and domestic space from the perspective of temporal change and the interactions of the physical and social composition of the house.

[28] Turku City Archives, Fire Insurance Policies K16–K18.
[29] Turku City Archives, Fire Insurance Policies K16, 11.10.1792.
[30] *Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Kungörelse, Om inrättning til en Almän Brand-Försäkring. Gifwen Stockholms Slott, then 15 April 1782.*

Flexible houses, moving households

Houses are often considered relatively stable entities in both their social and material appearance. The studies based on probate inventories, for example, are often tied to the presupposition that the arrangement of furnishings at a certain moment represent a generalizable situation. From the perspective of social history and households, this delusion of stability is often built into the frame of research, while the examination of temporal and spatial changes in houses is not attainable from the employed documentary evidence.

The material at hand enables the simultaneous analysis of the flux of households and the physical domestic space. The following passage illustrates the temporal development in a house, where rapid and broad shifts overrule stable continuities. The constant change of not only households but also the alterations of social status reveal the flexibility of domestic space to accommodate the whole cross-section of the urban population of the late 18th and early 19th century town.

The substantial and constant changes in the numbers and sizes of the households occupying House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter, with the reconstruction of the house plan, indicate that the physical boundaries could be adapted easily to very different conditions. Between 1770 and 1820, when the buildings represented in figure 2 were standing on the plot, all groups of the town population were represented among the lodgers. The number of households varied from 1 to 6, and the occupants changed in cycles of a few years (figure 4).[31]

The fluctuations of the number, structure and size of the households as well as the presence of all social classes on the same plot is salient. The constant change indicates that the same rooms were occupied successively by people from very different backgrounds. The very same rooms served for a variety of needs, also for the purposes of crafting and trading, as the numerous craftsmen, including cobblers, a tailor, a jeweller, a confectioner, a brass smith and a snuff maker indicate. It is however interesting that the maximum number of households seems to be restricted to the number of four separate hallways in the buildings. This number was exceeded only during the 1810s when house owners in Turku took lodgers gladly overall in the city, because otherwise they were obliged to billet Russian soldiers as a duty of a recently occupied territory.[32]

The few outbuildings on the majority of the plots made possible a minor degree of self-sufficiency. In House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter, a small granary and even smaller cowshed could probably serve the needs of one or two households. The firewood shed and the privy were inevitably shared by all the households of the plot. The nature of the early modern household as a unit of victual production is thus no more recognizable in the spatial contours of this kind of urban house.

[31] See footnote no. 23 for the tax poll sources.
[32] Oscar Nikula, *Åbo Stads historia 1809–1856* (Åbo 1973).

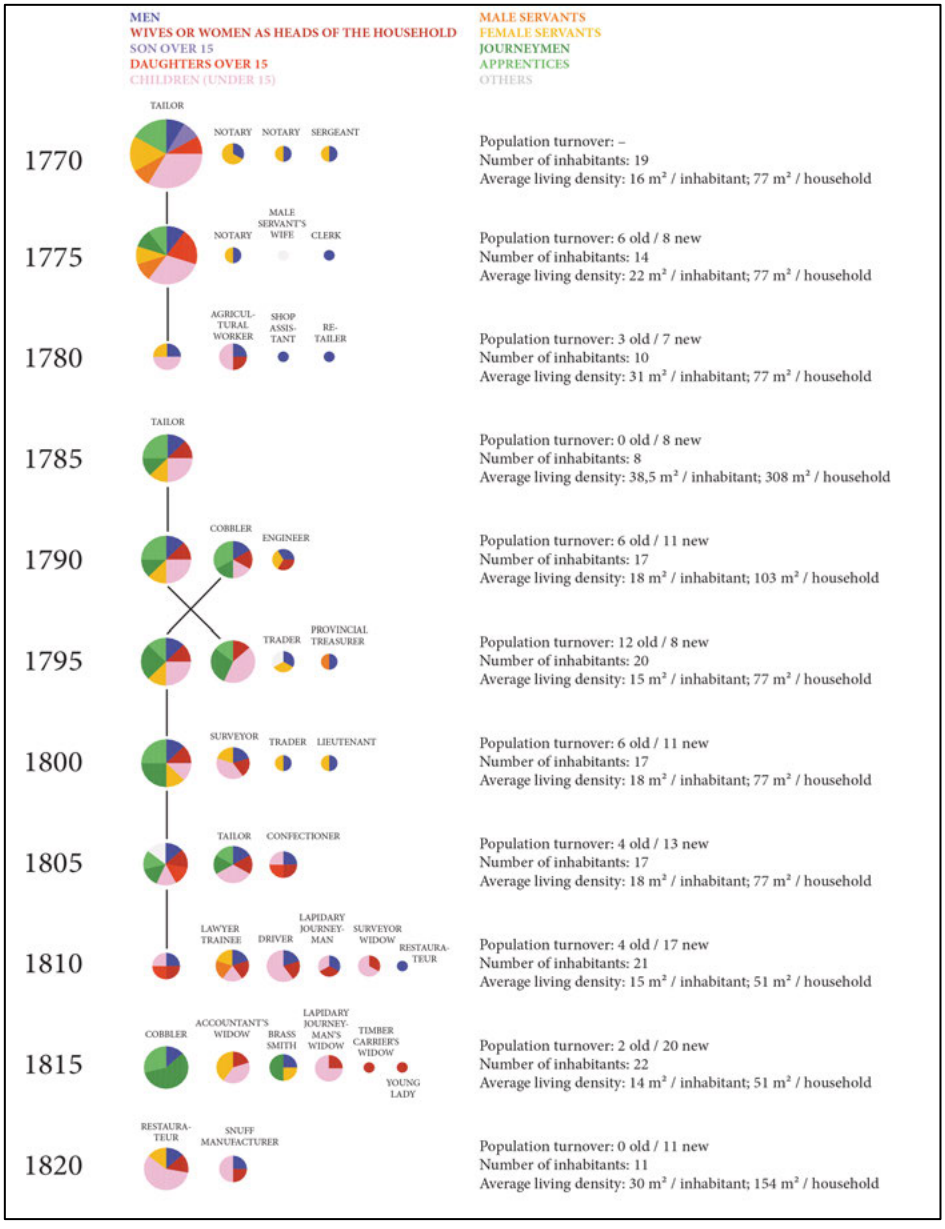

Figure 4. The owners and tenants of Southern Quarter 143 between 1770–1820, based on poll tax records. Drawing: Author.

It is interesting, that House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter simultaneously exhibits its stability and the mobility of occupants. Between 1770–1820 there were only six house owners, two of them staying over 15 years, who all inhabited the same plot, but the lodgers changed completely in few years or even every year. Even one single ”house” could comprise an internal variety of several ”houses” comprised of the house owner's long-lasting presence and the constant flow of lodgers.

Living density and the question of privacy

The results on living density are however the most interesting feature of the data revealed in this research. When the number of rooms in House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter are compared to the number of occupants, there were, on the average, only 1.6 occupants per room during the period 1770–1820, including children under 15 years. The average living density during these years was 19 square metres per occupant, including children. Compared to corresponding numbers for the lower classes in Finnish towns in the last years of the late 19th and the early 20th century, when statistics on living density were compiled for the first time, these numbers seem exceptionally spacious.[33]

The overcrowding of the lower-class houses in early modern cities is illustrated in a variety of studies, including Turku.[34] The general picture of early modern living density is based on descriptions of housing. Diaries and similar personal testimony, but especially court records, have been extensively exploited to illustrate the crowding of early modern dwellings. Descriptions of people sharing, not only rooms but even beds, are numerous in the most perused evidence of early modern domesticity, the court records. However, the court testimonies include only events seen or heard by someone and thus exclude everything that happened beyond the reach of spatial collectivity. The lack of privacy is ubiquitous, and it is built into the nature of the evidence, and any pursuit of privacy – locked doors or nocturnal dissipations – is exposed in the record only when it was perceived by someone.

A comparison of the reconstructions of the physical space and the poll tax records provides a novel way to understand the early modern living density in the 18th century urban context. The information on the room measurements in the fire insurance documents can be compared to the number of persons and households in the census records. This provides a means to calculate the average living density on separate plots and occasionally for single houses or households. Although it is self-evident that square meters per person reveal nothing about the *experience* of spaciousness or overcrowding – especially when speaking of the experience of people who lived over 200 years ago – the numbers can however be compared to the impression the court records have previously uncovered.

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[33] For the first statistics that count the living density per room in Finland, see *Wäenlasku Helsingin, Turun, Wiipurin ja Oulun kaupungeissa Maaliskuussa 1870, Recensement de la population de Helsingfors, d'Abo, de Wiborg et d'Uleaborg en Mars 1870* (Helsinki 1874). For the first statistics of living density in square metres in Turku, see G. R. Snellman, *Tutkimus vähmepivaraisten asunto-oloista vuonna 1905 Turun kaupungissa sekä viereisissä Kaarinan ja Maarian pitään osissa* (Turku 1906). Currently the criterion defined by United Nations for overly crowded dwelling is 20 square metres per occupant, a number usually prevalent only in Western countries.

[34] Studies describing the overcrowded early modern conditions of living, see e.g. Raffaela Sarti, *Europe at Home, Family and Material Culture 1500–1800* (Yale 2002) p. 119–122; Vickery (2009). For the case of Turku, the most comprehensive study is: Tuula Ruskeeniemi, *Turkulaisten arjen ja juhlan tilat 1700-luvun lopulla,* Master's thesis (Turku 2006). See also Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen, "Kaupunkilaispiikojen elämää 1770-luvun Turussa", in Marjatta Rahikainen & Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen (eds.), *Työteliäs ja uskollinen. Naiset piikoina ja palvelijoina keskiajalta nykypäivään* (Jyväskylä 2006).

Obviously, the upper-class houses of Turku had a similar spaciousness to modern affluent houses in Western countries. However, the middle and lower-class housing are the most interesting subjects according to the research theme in question. These groups of the population consist of traders and craftsmen, as well as the lower gentry, workmen, and lastly various people of limited means.

It is self-evident that the space in terms of square meters were not "divided" equally between all the members of a household. In addition, control over some space in a house was (and is) not immutable but was occasional and subject to change. The court records reveal that servants could also withdraw to locked chambers in their pursuit of privacy for intimate socialising.[35] In the case of the northern corners of Europe the contrast between the summery and wintery conditions of the domestic rooms cannot be overemphasized. During the warm seasons non-domestic rooms, such as granaries, storehouses and sauna chambers, were also occupied for living, as revealed by the lower court (Kämner Rätten) records of Turku.[36] The threshold between indoors and outdoors did not constitute a perceptible boundary for domestic rooms in the summer, while in the winter the division was substantial. It is also probable, that not all chambers were heated during outstandingly cold periods of winter. Thus, the living density suggested above can be considered both over- and underestimates, relative to the seasonal conditions. It is nevertheless possible to conclude that considerable overcrowding does not appear from the data even in the densest imaginable wintery conditions.

The absence of the impressions of overcrowding, that the court records reiterate, relates to an interconnected set of reasons. As already mentioned, density has (other) eyes while a private chamber is sightless. Events that occurred in shared rooms were much more likely to end up in the courts. Thus, the interrelation of human action and spatiality becomes more intense in court descriptions, picturing mostly overcrowded circumstances. It is possible that the industrial revolution caused the overcrowding of urban domestic spaces, while early modern town houses were more often less densely occupied.

The discussion that historians hold about privacy in the context of domesticity is often juxtapositioned to its modern counterpart, the genesis of the public sphere. The ambition to track the origins of privacy in some straightforward or single historical evidence, such as descriptions on individuality or an architectural novelty of domestic space, are usually flimsy.[37] Privacy is, of course, a contingent and context-dependent concept and cultural phenomenon that is not measurable or unquestionably observable in the historical contours of physical space.

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[35] For the cases of Turku, see Vainio-Korhonen (2006) p. 125–126. For the meaning of flexible boundaries and thresholds in the early modern house, see also Amanda Vickery, "An Englishman's Home is his Castle? Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth-century London House", *Past and Present* 199 (2008) p. 158–163.

[36] Ruskeeniemi (2006) p. 43.

[37] Meldrum (1999) p. 37–38; Leif Jerram, "Space: a Useless Category for historical Analysis?", *History and Theory* 52 (2013) p. 400–419.

Because the notion ”privacy” did not exist, for the 18th century people, in its current meaning of individuality, for historians any traces of ”privacy”, even personal descriptions on individuality written by the past people, are in any case of conjectural nature.

Conclusions

This article focuses only on one specific town, on a specific plot and specific decades, but even single examples may nevertheless allow some conclusions on the interrelations of early modern households and domestic space. House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter reveals the dynamic interrelation of early modern households and domestic space in Swedish towns.

First, any clear spatial patterns congruent with households are impossible to discern from the physical space. Most houses in late 18th century Turku accommodated more than one household, and the fluctuations of the numbers of households on a certain plot were often rapid and extensive. Especially in the case of lower-class houses with the presence and constant flux of several households, the plasticity of the house plans instead of clear thresholds and boundaries between households' spatial precincts seems to be a central attribute of the domestic architecture. The physical space, the house plan, was stable but its stability enabled the constant change of social compositions.

It is important to be aware of the dual-edged nature of spatiality in the shaping of domesticity. It is sometimes assumed that the internal connections of rooms, the ways the movement in the house is channeled and constrained, are mostly a result of conscious construction and modification. However, the domestic architecture of the densely built early modern towns was often compelled to compromise between scarce space and already existing structures and buildings. The physical space constrained the material framework, within which the moving and changing flux of households had to settle. Therefore, the house plan as a physical space may be comprehended as an active agent, a constraint, in the shaping of households, notably in the densely populated houses of lower classes with a dearth of space.

Secondly, the argument includes its pure opposite: human action is never completely predetermined by the material settings of space. An architectural innovation does not necessary implicate any social innovation, e.g. the growth of privacy or the division of work and living or vice versa. The outlines of physical space alone should not be used as straightforward evidence of any argument concerning social phenomena.

Taking a short return to the long historiography of the topic, the difference between the terms *household* and *houseful* is constitutive in the framework of this article. Some male servants living in their own houses in the back yards, for instance, are spatially comparable to single households, while at the same time single buildings, without clear division in separate dwellings, could accommodate

several households. The sense of Laslett's locational criterion, the question of how the "household" is shaped and constrained spatially, seems secondary, at least in the urban context of the 18th century House no. 143 of the Southern Quarter. Similar critical arguments on the excessive stability that have been highlighted previously in the other contexts and criterions trying to reach overly extrapolate definitions for households, hold obviously also for the locational criterion of household.