



Together on our own

the meaning and position of the
residential community

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residential community

Master thesis by
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“Wir wollen nicht mehr aneinander
vorbeiwohnen, sondern miteinander
wohnen.” (Freisitzer et al., 1987, p. 15)



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Together on our own
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Abstract

At present, residential development is not responding to needs of diversification and the resilience that urban development must do, often lacking social resilience. Simultaneously, cohousing units and projects that emphasize community life emerge and are more common than previously. This thesis investigates the meaning of the community in residential environments and how it is related to current social and societal alterations, including themes of individualization and the inflexibility of the general residential sector. As a concept, housing development emphasizing togetherness is many times seen as a rescue to diversify the residential sector, at least from an architect's point of view.

To put societal theories in relation to the residential community is a method to explain and understand the significance of the social life in cohousing units. Methodologically, sociological and philosophical aspects are included to expand the field of knowledge, together with a field study. This is carried out by interviewing residents living in [strong] residential communities. The study forms the empirical base that shows the progression and meaning of the residential community in comparison to standard development.

The outcome is both expected, showing the significance of the social bonds, at the same time it is dubious and contradictory, as individuals underline the importance of privacy and relying on casual acquaintance rather than intimacy. Architects must be better at understanding and elaborating with the social life, since shifting responsibility to residents risks leading to segregation rather than the believed inclusion that regularly is underlined. Being aware of the community, and the meaning of it, is a prerequisite for a social sustainable and resilient development. To critically examine and discuss the significance of community life and understand who is providing dwellings for whom are conclusions from the study.

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#1 introduction



Axelsson, J., 2014. Staircase at Tersen in Falun.

Individuals residing together

Together: on our own. Together is a word that gives connotations of socializing with other people, spending time jointly and cooperating. The phrase “on our own” is suddenly more dubious, positive in the sense that we have the ultimate power over our existence and at the same time it is about being left alone, a solitaire without remedy. Typing them side-by-side is contradictory, is it even possible to be together if alone? The duplicity of the title indicates an overall view of how we regard our relationship to society, communities and the phenomenon residential co-living.

Consequently, discussions of residential development and the social life that takes place within often gain interest, both within an architectural discourse as well as generally in media. Changes of values, norms and our relation to society are reformulating the notion of living and the idea about what a dwelling should be. Together with a diminishing social capital in general, other ways of residing and perceiving the home are necessary (Berggren et al. 2006, p. 378). Firstly and maybe most critically, we experience a shortage of residences and the situation seems to be inevitably close to making the whole system, where people buy, rent and sell apartments collapse.

Secondly, we are rephrasing the idea of home, as a more globalized world continuously provides us with new ideas and diversifies traditional cultural patterns. To obtain, and reclaim, a sustainable way of residing we must develop trustworthy and safe environments that are socially resilient, the residence is a key factor in this and necessary to put into a context. Living in a community is one way of stabilizing our presence. There has never been so many formal cohousing projects realized before and there are several planned (Williams, 2005, p. 202). Due to this, community aspects are important to discuss but also why I personally have developed an interest

in concerns for new ways of residing and alternative ways of creating homes, since the development often comes down to this. During previous education residential issues have often been in focus intriguing me.

We need to broaden theories and perspectives that refer the conception of residing, since a pluralized and individualized population puts new demands on various ways to dwell, not at least achieving environments that are durable and socially attractive. Emphasizing community is one way. There are several beneficial outcomes of communal living, such as: a deeper understanding for, and belief, in the residential area, an anchoring of the residence in contemporary life, aspects of belonging and safety, as well as improved health (Sanoff, 2008, p. 25). Being able to integrate several aspects of everyday life into the residence enables new social and economical configurations to appear, e.g. fusions of working and residing, or caring for the ill. These patterns emerge today in a few pioneer cases, but often lack physical space for its realization as current development is standardized, not creating necessary resilient urban structures. A precondition for this resilient development is that people have equal opportunities and are included in their residential situation.

To be able to reflect upon this social realm in a residential context I have turned to sociology, as well as philosophy, to understand the way we see ourselves and how it is changing. A few ideas are presented in the thesis that clarifies these issues; the main ones are Beck's thoughts on individualization together with Asplund's and Tönnies' discussions of communities. Attempting to materialize sociological and philosophical knowledge, or to put it into relation to a material context, is a way to understand the importance of social life in a built environment. Simultaneously, it gives perspectives that are rarely presented, to the two sides.

In addition, the average physical manifestation of dwellings is based on a monotonous and stiff building sector that keeps residential development

in control, with a few main actors as producers. The consequence is standardized production, leaving little space for personal expression and own attributes (referring to evoked interests and demands on personalization and cooperation). Already in the 50's, Smithson's *House of the future* left no space for personal belongings, thus making the residence impersonal and unsuccessful. The overall development has since these times been continuous: the project was undoubtedly an extreme, but expresses a fascination for the standardized and industrialized and an ever so often present gap in development to the actual resident (Mattsson, 2004, p. 168). That housing development is static at its present state could be regarded as a fact, bearing in mind that a lot of housing production still is influenced by a modernist way of planning (Nylander, 2003, pp. 51-52). In residential development, diversity and plurality are important issues and are to a certain point implemented, e.g. integrated in senior housing blocks, however, not to a satisfactory extent (Nilsson, 2007, p. 46).

In order to understand issues presented in the text and to clarify a subjective use of certain expressions, a part of the terminology is explained. The terms are often dubious and personal as language use connected to housing tend to be, nevertheless, a first understanding is useful.

Cohousing covers a vast definition in itself; it generally consists of households in private dwellings that share common facilities that emphasize and enhance the ability of living together. The social life is normally regarded as important and many are developed in co-creational and cooperative ways. Different forms of cohousing have gained interest during a long time in the Nordic countries in Europe, especially in Denmark where *Bofællesskaber* is common, as well as in the Netherlands (Fromm, 1998, p. 54). In this thesis the term cohousing is used to describe a general typology covering co-operative, but also co-creational and collective examples.

Community is frequently seen as positive and has many connotations,



Baycrest, 2005. Residential development in Hong Kong. An example of a highly industrialized and standardized development.



Smithson, P., 1956. Smithson's industrially produced "House of the Future"

especially within social science research. Within the field of architecture it is often discussed as positive, and crucial, for urban and residential development. However, how to deal with and make spatial solutions for it, is not as obvious and easily executed. In this regard the more explicit phrase residential community can be used, combining aspects of dwelling, domesticity and home, with aspects of community and shaping life together. In this work the word has a wide definition, containing aspects of sociality that are beneficial in different constellations. On an overall level the term community is used in a positive sense and it is regarded as beneficial to live in a social situation, simultaneously, community can be as negative. Exclusion and alienation, or personal withdrawal, are just to mention a few outcomes. However, community is regarded as a key aspect to obtain socially resilient environments, a necessity to achieve social sustainability in neighbourhoods and urban situations.

Individualization is a term that has both positive and negative nuances; being individual is often connected to aspects to selfishness or inability to cooperate. As we are exposed for everlasting amount of choices, the individual also represent a free mind in societal structures. The term links to integrity and diversity, which we regard as positive aspects. However, that individualization is a predominant process, or aspect, in society (Beck, 2001, p. 3), is most researchers and maybe even public, aware about and agree upon. A major aspect contributing to individualization is the fact that we no relate to traditional ties, but aiming to become independent from them (Beck et al., 2002, p. 33). Not many would disagree with that society is consisting of accumulation of individuals, but that we are dependent upon society and social relations to become individuals is perhaps more difficult to grasp and it shows that individualization is connected to a relationship to the collective (Elias, 1987, p. 21).

Aim and research questions

The aim of the thesis is to focus on the residential community and cohousing in relation to society. Often regarded as a dubious and difficult issue to approach, lacking direct physical manifestations, the community is perceived as something natural or “*apparent*” and thereby inevitably difficult to grasp. The question is how a joint social life is perceived today and what basic foundation the community has in society, the overall aim is therefore to investigate the relationship between the community and social development in late modernity (or second modernity: there is a range of terms to label present times that together take a step from postmodern times, but not abandoning them¹). A strong and alive community is an important part of creating socially beneficial residential areas and the study aims to create a broader understanding for varied aspects of residential situations, explicitly connected to the social life within. Community is providing the desired resilience and anchors in urban contexts, but it is not as obvious as it many times are in hypothetical discussions. Together with relating these issues to a theoretical situation, as well as a contextual, an understanding for communal life is created. The work aims at broaden the picture; dealing with prejudices and introducing a transdisciplinary approach to the theme of what the social life of the community could be and is a reaction to. The main points of departure are therefore to focus on social aspects, but also to create a background to the topic. The residential community is not immensely implemented, but there are several projects making the concept interesting to study. The main questions are:

¹ In addition, it can be interesting to note the terms hypermodernity and supermodernity. Together our time share the fact that we have stepped further from modernity's wish to search the truths, the postmodern destruction and deconstruction into a super-medial era where will and choice guide in search for information and interconnectivity. The late modernity, and supermodernity, does not strive for creating the truth in itself.

What does it mean to live in a residential [cohousing] community?
What need does a residential community answer to?
What significance does cohousing have in contemporary society?

A community is preconditioned as a positive aspect in residential and domestic situations. In order to clarify and investigate the significance of the concept it is necessary to look at what positive outcomes the community has and to overview the physical manifestation together with the possible lack of it. Hypothetically, the goal is to reach a balance between the individual and the community. As a part of this, the interplay between the community and society is an important part, at times dialectic or correlating, in explaining the meaning of the residential community and where it derives from. A major part of this understanding is to describe and reflect upon the collective, the individual and the personal participation in community in parallel to societal issues.

In the foreword to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) anthology on individualization, Bauman states that:

“...modern society exists in its activity of ‘individualizing’, as much as the activities of individuals consist in that daily reshaping and renegotiating of their mutual engagements called society” (ibid. p. xiv).

Apparently, the opposing terms *individual* and *society* form contemporary situations where social actions have to be adapted, altered and chosen to be able to exist as individuals conquer time and space. We remember Elias' statement that we are dependent upon society to underline us as individuals. The fact that the community appears to be growing in importance makes the residential community and the reasons of the attractions to it an interesting study. As in Bauman's quotation, there is an intriguing duplicity between

the community and the thought that free individuals form it. However, what does it mean to us and how does this formation succeed?

By presenting social connections together with relevant and influential societal alterations, an understanding for the need of community and why people choose to care for it is clarified; hypothetically the social life can be described as a consequence of present situations. Obviously, cohousing and the residential community can be regarded as a reaction and response to society and an overall unfulfilling residential situation, as people search for social contexts. The study goes beyond the traditional architectural discourse, including aspects from both a philosophical and sociological realm.

The aspects of individualization and social science that are included are a selection, however they relate to the need for community and point at larger tendencies. Several of the built examples housing communities are designed and developed aside from normal or standardized development, but frequently discussed.

The thesis is probably more directed to an audience of design professionals, but also to a wider public interested in social science. As stated, the subject tries to go beyond traditional discussions and attempts to merge different approaches, from discussing society, understanding residential situations and the social life. Possibly unfamiliar to those used to an architectural approach or other well-defined frameworks, the study aims at creating a foundation for further discussions. The work is by no means objective, as it includes personally gathered data obtained in various contexts, influencing the result. Still, the work depicts instant moments that are interesting to examine. Responsibility for consideration of communities stretches beyond the planners and designers, it even includes the participator. Yet, including a wider spectrum does not mean that responsibility is moved around or spread out. The community begins with you and me.

Purpose and relevance

The amount of research on cohousing is vast but often general, however, to a great extent it is descriptive or guiding in development; it seldom discusses the matter with social aspects and related theory. Some might reject the theme as a private matter dependent on the individual's own choice, imposing power and ability on whomever have the urge to take part in a residential community. The interest for communities is increasing on an overall level; still, it is often outside the formal or standardized development and not as common as it potentially can be. Yet, it is regarded as a key aspect of resilient development mainly due to the social and anchoring awareness they create. It is important not to disregard the residential communities as something vague or peripheral, but the benefits and phenomena are necessary to examine and discuss.

Growing up in a neighbourhood similar to a residential community (but not in a cohousing situation) several of the issues presented have not been stigmatized personally, as I believe the questions to be amongst many of my friends, or generally. Talking to neighbours, participating in common workdays and playing with other children in the area were parts of my domestic environment. I regarded it as natural in every residential area, for later realizing that it necessarily is not the case. There are still prejudices about communal living as being without personal limits and unrestricted, as well as many have romanticized pictures of thriving communities. A proper “reality-check” of the current state and implementations is therefore interesting and important.

There are many present examples in Sweden (formally there is a minimum of 45 cohousing projects) and several in the realization phase. It is therefore justified to relate this interest to societal states and alterations since research have to investigate current development with a critical and questioning

view. As individualization is an apparent aspect in society, the relation between the dialectic aspects of community, collectiveness and individuality are essential themes. Beck writes that all processes of individualization are important firstly to understand societal shifts, and secondly because they are changing notions of socially important lifestyle patterns: e.g. marriage, working and not at least residential situations (Beck et al. 2002, p. 31). The current individualization processes and overall emphasis on the ability *to choose* support and give reason to the idea of a residential development apart from the standardized, as a stagnating public residential sector is unable to provide the population with adequate housing (Berggren et al., 2009, Wilkinson, 2010 and Nylander, 2011).

This study is supposed to depict an image of the residential community that more seldom is discussed, at least not within architecture: that is the social dimensions. Cross-examination between social science and architecture is often luckily executed, together with the use of existing theories and well known methods it explains the objectives and relates them to a context. Even though some of the theories are not modern, they are substantial for the contemporary. In addition, they provide a foundation to the architectural profession, being something of an exploration and point of departure. Naturally, it adds to my personal formation in becoming an architect, as I believe theory to be likewise important as implemented design work. The text and investigation is partly to be regarded as reflections of existing evolvments and situations, at the same time as it shows instant moments. Situations are changing rapidly, but transformations take generations to go through.

The purpose of the work is to show the importance of examining the residential community, both as a consequence of society but also in a wider discussion of residential sustainability. The general term sustainability touches on a vast field of aspects; however, in this work *sustainability* is used

in the sense that it achieves resilience. Many times, a residential community is seen as a necessary part in reaching a resilient situation, incorporating aspects of social but also economical and environmental sustainability. As one can experience a green wash effect talking about sustainability, one can notice a “community-overload” with an exceeding amount of articles, lectures and debates regarding the positive outcomes of the theme. Participation, recognition and social connections are underlined as necessary aspects of every urban and societal development. On the contrary it is necessary to critically examine the outcomes and see these aspects with other perspectives. To position the theme in relation to individualization and private development deepens the understanding for them.

The ambition is to discuss what the interest in cohousing depends on, why people direct to residential communities and how we should regard the slight interest in residential communities and cohousing situations: what traces are left in its aftermath? Is it a way to increase the social capital? These aspects are summarized in the wider scope of discussing the meaning of residential communities, what it is a reaction to, as well as how it is perceived by and what it means to the participants.

Method

The project is mainly text based, a method that I have been eager to try again, with previous academic studies in languages and comparative literature. It is a method that seldom is executed during the education and formation in becoming an architect, however, its power and structure is exciting to investigate, as well as the work is an opportunity.

Searching for information about cohousing, it is easy to get off the beaten track or to get lost in the immense amounts of articles, books and research that has been carried out within the theme. Due to this, the investigation has a qualitative aim and focus. I have allowed myself to let the process grow somewhat organically at times, searching for methods and ways that are new and unexpected from a personal point of view. The field is vast, but previous research and literature studies have provided me with a deeper understanding how to regard issues of dwellings and residences. Together with case study examples my understanding for the concept of what we call a [private] home and the social life is broadened.

As stated the study is qualitative and there is not statistically measurable data acquired; the study rather aims at understanding how residential development outside the standardized is progressing but also at searching for attitudes, actions and the desired social bonds within the domestic environment. Stylistically, I have attempted to use a neutral language, at times even personal. The text has a basic positive tone to the issues of community and involvement; however, it is critical in its character in order to examine the matter in a rightful way. The material is not totally objective, due to choosing certain sources instead of others or more obviously with the use of pronouns such as I, we or they. This bias is always important to consider, especially conducting interviews, but trying to zoom out and come back several times to the work helps avoiding it. Critical reflections to

the subject have been favourably included as well, pluralizing the outcome and discussion, i.e. how communities can alienate and even segregate.

To broaden the perspective and focus of interest I regard it as necessary and interesting to go beyond traditional sources for obtaining knowledge. That is why I have proceeded beyond the field of architectural research to indulge in sociology and philosophy. In architectural research this may not be something new, as it is a subject that by its means is trans-disciplinary. As Pallasmaa (2014) states: architecture is a discipline that contains essences of a vast number of categories and subjects and must be that, being an “impure” science. At the same time the scope investigated have certain limits, and have to be defined by those. One specific theme was issues of how other cultures perceive the residence and community, as well as informal formations of community life and the simple definition of home. These are fields for further studies and discussion.

Initially, my knowledge regarding residential community was not sufficient, however, having an interest has lead to important and unexpected points of departure overviewing literature and references. A field study was a necessary tool to anchor the work in reality and to depict a present scenario with real implementations. This part has been carried out with two major methods; one is the study of articles and literature, not so different from other theoretical work. The other part is actual visits at housing projects with emphasis on community, combined with interviewing residents. Questions to the participants about the life and their relationship to their dwelling and view on the residential community were asked. The interviews were conducted freely to make the interviewees reflect upon their situation and relation to the community. The use of real examples and interviews is interesting, and at times an unfamiliar method but has made the other theoretical research alive. The interviews were recorded and partly transcribed, and presented as (anonymous) quotations and sources

of information. The analysis work was often carried out listening to the interviews and overviews of the specific material.

Interviewing was demanding and originally too little time was accounted for this part, which during the process turned out to be important for the thesis. Scarce knowledge about the method of interviewing forced me to investigate its technique more thoroughly in order to perform them informatively, professionally and relaxed. It is a method that seldom is executed during the education; hence it provides a different and new perspective to the subject. The methodological basis was found in qualitative methods and sociological. The interviews are the empirical foundation that explains why and how people have chosen to live in a certain situation and in a community. Likewise as for the chosen literature and various objectives, the case studies are not a total collection of projects present. They are chosen due to geographical location in urban contexts, as well as being multi family homes; therefore, the work depicts a Scandinavian cultural setting. In total 20 interviews were conducted to form the empirical material and they show different approaches to living in community, from a scale of low internal communal aspects to a high degree of collective and collaborative influences in the living.

The case study visits proceeded slightly differently in the specific cases, much due to what the residents I contacted suggested, to build trust and make the interviewees comfortable. Nevertheless, a satisfactory picture of the projects has been acquired to the extent that patterns and conclusions appeared. Most interviews were conducted in the tenants' private apartments, or some in close connection to it. Exceptionally, they (two) were conducted at the respective place of work. The selection of the interviewees was done in collaboration with representatives of the different objects, aiming for diverse backgrounds, age and gender; the selection is arbitrary to some extent though.

These different methods were initially difficult to work with, much due to little previous knowledge, but they have multiplied a view on the topic of residential communities and hopefully form an interesting contribution to a discussion of the home, participation and the community. The work is organized in three sections, one presenting the theories regarding community, the second tries to see the background from a contextual point of view of the matter with discussions of the residential situation, specifically a Swedish context. The last part is based on the interview study, bringing up points from the previous parts exemplifying them with empirical material. The conclusion suggests being a reaction to a current development that does not fulfil the aims and wishes, or the needs of the people that take part in these examples. Moreover, the critical part of cohousing as being something excluding is discussed. They exemplify a will to distinguish and being separated as well as demanding a lot of interest and time from people involved.





#2
theory

Introduction section #2

This section explains theoretical positions for aspects of community, as well as relevant theories regarding society and the structural change of values from a traditionally collective view towards increased individualization. Sociological and philosophical points of departure are introduced to enrich the architectural discussion. Paradoxically, the interest for communities is increasing, as individualization is progressing. Does it mean some people are looking back?

Furthermore, the section contains a brief historical view on the community and collective ideas together with overviewing present development, often a private and marginalized such. Additionally, merits from living in community and participation in creation of residential areas are briefly discussed. The chapter tries to focus on why it is beneficial to maintain and create resilient social neighbourhoods where the residents experience a connection to the common life.

The idea of community

Community creating factors come with, as already stated, many definitions and aspects. It spans from covering features of superficially belonging to strong friendship and domestic relations. Many definitions are fuzzy and difficult to grasp, even though several of us share some of its preconceptions. The importance of and how to implement community and aspects of belonging has been discussed during a long time, unfortunately they stop at the drawing table. The psychologist Maslow added an important contribution as he introduced his hierarchy of needs in the 1950's. In his formulation, community, or rather communal appreciation is something we search for after criteria of safety and belonging. The term belonging is a key issue as well, considering the fact that it creates safety and trust (Maslow, 1954). A deeper understanding that we care about belonging and our surrounding is important to bear in mind, in order to realise why communal living is important and beneficial. This belonging is a key aspect in the formation of a resilient residential future, because we spend a lot of time in our residences and they are inevitably an important part of us.

Nevertheless, communal aspects are first and foremost deriving from contact between people. The physical reality is the space for these encounters: why, how and when gives them significance and meaning and an architectural discussion is beneficial. Åström (1985, p. 247) notes that it is important to create communal aspects in residential areas on an overall level for people that live alone, elderly and children since they have less ability to move to other locations to meet family or friends. Their social life is depending on the vicinity. It is important to strengthen the social networks, which at times are fragile and delicately created in residential realities. Taking care of the community is difficult and can only be done by the residents (*ibid.*, p. 247). However, who is responsible for developing it is



Axelsson, J., 2014. Domesticized common room at Tersen in Falun.

not as obvious and it needs a physical context.

The formation of the residential community is due to different reasons and the most important one might be, as previously mentioned, a sense of belonging, as Maslow puts it, together with understanding the place specific social networks. Sanoff has studied residential participation in various steps of planning as a way of strengthening these social networks. He means that if future users are integrated in the design and planning processes, comprehension for the development occurring is obtained together with commune aspects (Sanoff, 2000, pp. 9-10). Communal and participatory models are important as they enhance processes of democratization, and accessibility for many citizens: they do not feel ignored neither on a large, nor on a smaller scale (Freisitzer et al. 1987, p. 14). That participation and community contribute to an understanding of democracy and includes people is one of the strongest advantages. How does it appear in an actual setting?

In an essay, the sociologist Olsson (Olsson, 2007) states the conclusions from a few surveys from the 90's about community creating factors in the area close to the home, especially in multi-family houses. What many of the respondents regard important is having access to semiprivate areas, close to the apartment, that are neutral as they consider this a main place for meetings outside the dwelling. Furthermore, a majority of the answers show that it was important with a clear distinction between what is private and what is public. The historical explanation to this is the idealistic turn in the 19th century (that came with the industrialization) and the values of the emerging bourgeois ideals at the time. Previously, we did not regard the residence as connected to a private sphere, as people would enter each other's homes to socialize in rural society. A fact we Swedes might have forgotten about, popularly referring to ourselves as rigid and unsociable. Nevertheless, a few key points that are regarded as more community shaping than others

can be extracted from Olsson's essay (Olsson, 2007, pp. 57-66):

- the local context and the vicinity is important for the residents
- it is important that residents use the neutral areas available in order to meet, i.e. the semi-private spaces close to the buildings and that the residents experience a shared responsibility for these areas and facilities
- that the residents consist of a stabile group, and that there are few dislocations in order to create confidence amongst each other.

Referring to commune and shared space (a "semiprivate sphere") as empowering community or collective values, it is inevitable to talk about territories and boundaries, according to the architect Habraken (1998, p. 134-135). We create territories, where we accept different actions to take place. Dwelling is, in Habraken's mind, the act of territorializing and privatizing space, often the most personal one. Within this space there are different borders where we tolerate various actions, but where these borders are is unsaid. Most importantly though, is that it is in between the boundaries where meetings and social interactions occur. (Habraken is devoting many chapters to issues of boundaries, gates and the concept of passing through, or passing by, territories in his book). He means that there are several types of these boundaries: the porch for meeting with your neighbours or the small streets surrounding the blocks where people live. Thus, the act of living means territorializing space not including the act of building in itself. The space where the commune aspects are created is the space in between, not the private or the public one, rather the semiprivate where unpredicted actions can occur. An interesting note could be Hillier's way of analysing floor plans, where spots of interaction can be highlighted important for social life (Klarqvist et al., 1985, pp. 29-33).

Furthermore, to follow Habraken's argumentation, he has an historical

approach to when we began to diminish space for social interaction. He means that with functionalism the zones *in between* were neglected and the capacity of a differentiated use became limited. During this era room specific functions were studied and with that the labelling of space (Habraken, 1998, p. 135). Suddenly, spaces that did not have an ultimate function could be rationalized away to economic reasoning, a theme Redvall (2007, p. 89) also touches on.

She describes how residents at times during the passage to modernism used spaces for other functions than what they supposedly were adapted for, not enabling a resident-specific use (i.e. using the kitchen as a bedroom). Usage was malfunctioning in the rooms they were progressing in since people still did what they were used to (ibid.). Undoubtedly, in this situation we have become less eager to explore other ways of socializing and interacting than we are supposed to, being stuck in a way of planning. We have adapted to a spatial situation that is weakening social interaction. The space provided is what we have, and if a certain way of life is supposed to be conducted in it, it is frustrating to empower another. Discussions arise such as: who would want the unplanned, in a presence where every label is important and every square metre has its economic and functional aim? Why is a designated use the magic formula, and not the spontaneous? Is communal life in itself organized?

A process from a preindustrial society to an industrialized (modernist) society is described by the social psychologist Johan Asplund. He points at the development from a rural society of peasants to a civilization of employees and workers under a monetary flow. Before the 19th century the *rural population* (Asplund uses the term *allmogen* in Swedish, having a wider symbolic meaning than the English, as they were not part of a nobility) was part of a collective with a “common mind”: on the contrary the new class in the cities of the industrialized world, the bourgeois, were own individuals.

Asplund explains this with an exemplification of the view upon time: to the previous population time was not something defined or linear, which it later became as people transformed into own *masters of a linear timespan*. Sweden was industrialized rather lately and the image and mind of the old rural Swede is still reminiscent in present society (Asplund, 1983, p. 96).

“The question is, if the Swedish bourgeois did not feel antipathy towards themselves at the turn of the century. At least they spent time reconstructing and idealizing their rural past.” (Ibid., translation by author.)

The collective mind set from previous times has perhaps never vanished from our personal constructions of ourselves, making us interested in community. The quotation above is referring to country homes that many people have access to and Asplund makes the point that the escape from an individual lifestyle to a collective is seen a refuge and idyll (Asplund, 1983, p. 96). This historical view on the longing for a collective mind, or reminiscence, shows us that we might be living in a continuum of collectiveness and community. We never fully abandoned the pre-industrialized (Scandinavian) living, which partly explains an interest in community. Asplund further means that the construction of the *Folkhemmet* accentuates this strive and communal mind even more. Nevertheless, has it become forgotten today? Berggren and Trägårdh investigate the relationship between the individual, an overall social community and society, and most strikingly, is probably the [Swedish] aim for a total individual independence.

“[...] what characterizes the Swedish society is not collectivism, but the alliance between the state and the individual that in a remarkable way has released the individual from the dependence on the family and a civil societal charity” (Berggren et al. 2006, p. 51, translation by author.)





Axelsson, J. 2012. A modern interpretation of the village. From the exhibition "Show me your model" at DAC, Copenhagen.

That we are organized in a larger group and seen as a mass, at the same time forced to be individuals that care for our own actions is a crucial part in understanding the relationship for us to the community. We lack institutions that care for our individual needs, as society on a general level is blunt. Quite paradoxical, as we are formed to be independent from, yet relying on community life, but a conclusion that Berggren and Trägårdh has. As a consequence, to find social support and individualized remedy, we have to turn elsewhere, rejecting general preconditions. We will come back to this theme throughout the text.

The actual space for communities to thrive is difficult to achieve, and dependent upon the foundation of the communal life. A categorization of cohousing projects is difficult and easily ambiguous. Gromark describes two main divisions that are interesting to focus on (possibly five different, of which two can be regarded as widely implemented): a pragmatic version and a self-fulfilling type. The first one is based upon economic and practical advantages whilst the latter is focused on personal development within a (smaller) community (Gromark, 1984, p. 170). These two categories, or archetypes, of cohousing are related to the societal development that is noted in the work. Both the increased emphasize on the individual, dealing with saving money, time or personal development, or the interest for the collective, and the community as an advantage per se.

To further understand and be more specific about the community, a view upon a historical foundation is necessary, that is a time perspective of the development of cohousing, the home and residential communities is necessary.

The home and the collective over time

Throughout times, as Asplund has pointed out, the village and community was what people would rely on. These institutions were the ones to which the individual could turn for support and they guaranteed safety and survival. The tight bonds to place and social constructs ensured control over the living situation, with co-living and social sustainability aspects as effects. Life was to a great extent lived within the domestic community, not all positively, since alienation and isolation were hard to break free from, or adapt to, with intense social control.

However, with the industrial revolution in 19th century, the society turned to individual focus.² Salaries were distributed and people started to have control over their own life situation and their time. Of significance is of course the emerging bourgeois class in many cities in the Western cultural hemisphere. Rather than having the family as a primary source of defining where the home and residence is, the physical apartment and its functions came to define what a dwelling is (Hagbert, 2010, pp. 35-39). One could discuss if this was the turn for the fact we still see today: the home, or the residence, became something defined by a market. This junction between the residence as a dwelling and a showcase for the inhabitants living there, most certainly derive from the emerging middle class. This set the standard for what the home should, or could be (see e.g. Hagbert, 2010).

The view upon the residence and the individual's right to it, became a question for the new socialist movements taking place across Europe. Caldenby (1992, p. 62) states that in the time of industrialization, organized

2 Philosophers such as Locke, but also Smith and Bentham developed ideas about individualism in the 17th century. Smith's economic models and liberalism put emphasise on the individual, whilst socialists wanted the state to care for the people to give everybody a decent life. Socialist ideals have been important in Sweden during the 20th century, but individualist focus has started to gain appreciation again since the 1980's.

efforts were done to supply homes for the masses. Suddenly, focus in society was shifted towards personal matters, the individuals well being and the historical community life was changed. In France and newly formed Soviet Union, collective housing appeared. This depends upon the fact that these countries were modern societies where utopian ideas were discussed and debated.

“The collective housing seems to appear in countries where transformation to modernity is taking place, both economically, politically, socially and culturally. Industrialization and urbanisation releases the traditional social bonds and creates individuals without connection to the cities.” (Caldenby, 1992, p. 66, translation by author)

In Sweden, the same thing happened during the 1930's. The collective housing (few in number, but important showcases) aimed for allowing women to work, as the household work was run co-operatively in these, often by hired staff (Caldenby, 1992, p. 65). The debate regarding community-creating aspects was not as present during the war, or after, to be revived again during the 1970's (Gromark, 1984, p. 27). The main issues at this time were regarding formation of community aspects amongst the residents and not only regarding community-creating factors in a bigger sense in society (as for example the Swedish *Folkhemmet* ideal). A glance at many built areas from the 60's and 70's in Sweden³ shows that there were *commune spaces* integrated in the buildings, such as common activity rooms or shared terraces. Informal meeting places in the urban structures, or possibilities of retrofitting were aspects that often were pushed aside. Ibelings (2009, p. 241) is on the same track as he believes that collective and public elements were important parts of multi family homes, but less

3 During the time of the state run "Million programme".

present today than they have been.

Discussions around social aspects within the residence appear to gain interest again today, a few years into the 21st century. Caldenby (1992, p. 64) observes that this interest comes in cycles. At its present state, if one turns towards collective housing, the issue has not been forgotten during the last 30 years and it is possible to see different reasons to this in a Swedish context. Discussions of community are common in the architectural sector, however, cuts in the welfare system, a stagnating residential market and lack of public funding for refurbishments in many residential areas creates small steps towards an awareness and involvement of joint aspects that is not to be foreseen. Issues of self-management and co-creation are today lifted to front in many articles and examples (also: see the case study chapter).

It can perhaps be a consequence to the large interest for a social resilience and user involvement over the last years. That is perhaps one reason why municipalities, education and residents start to believe in this development. Knowing that individualization and collective ideas are a base for both societal and residential structures, a closer look at these themes will explain the background more thoroughly.

Individuals together

This chapter will look closer at theories that describe the reformulation of our times in, what Beck calls, the second modernity. Firstly the text will discuss society and values and connect it to housing development. Shortly, it is possible to state that present network society is based on interlinking between different individuals forming sociality. Through looking into the duality between the single individual and her outreach to the collective we will see how these paradigms go together.

As noted, processes of individualization cannot be foreseen when discussing community creating and cooperative aspects in a residential context. This is apparent in a multitude of ways; from personalizing (even) trainers to the way we experience ourselves (we can all become anything). Society has undergone changes in regards on how we see the individual and personal. Naturally, individualization and collectiveness are opponents that are intriguingly attached to one another and discussed today in many articles and texts. The somewhat double picture is hard to manoeuvre into and discussions are often about whether individualization realizes collective interest or more strongly oppose it (Wilkinson, 2010, p. 454). These aspects are important in a residential context to the extent that they display how we regard our dwelling and its milieu. As a result, we focus on the individual as well as evident individual expressions, for instance through social media. However, and to repeat history, the overall idealistic change has progressed during a longer time, since the industrial revolution (Asplund, 1983, p. 95).

F. Fort suggests that there is a directly personal and individualized view on the person and individual. She states that we aim at obtaining strictly personal benefits from society: we want the money we put into our welfare systems to benefit us individually and immediately, rather than being beneficial for the society on an overall level. That we jointly pay for everything

is no longer a reality. If they do not, we move them elsewhere (2009, p. 35). In this regard a comparison with the (often) German phenomenon of *Baugemeinschaften* is interesting, as people who does not feel that they find adequate residences in the general housing stock construct them themselves. They point at a combination of individualization and collectiveness, as the community grows strong within. Berggren and Trägårdh notes the same tendencies, as the separation of the individual from the collective makes it almost impossible to procure everyone with what they specifically need. The societal system has designed us individually but cannot provide us with the specific: the individual autonomy has ironically become dictating, even though it springs from a collective thought (Berggren et al., 2006, p. 361). In addition, Ibelings (2014) says in an interview that for many people, the residence is an investment (note the customer and market relationship) and an individual matter that underlines personal values and manifestations, making it a manifestation of individuality.

Zooming out, one can see that Beck is on the same track stating that new choices and possibilities are posed on individuals and previous societal institutions break down. Beck questions what new modes of life are coming into the picture as older disintegrational ones fade out and how their manifestation appears (Beck et al., 2002, p. 2). Additionally, he argues that with an excessive individual focus, there is an increased level of competition amongst equals with a need to emphasize us in comparison to others. This risks isolating people within social groups (Beck, 1992, pp. 94-95). That is, do we not care for each other any longer?

Individualization is evident on all fronts, bearing in mind the amounts of choices we make on an every day basis are increasing. We choose where we are supposed to get medical services, where our children go school and when grocery shopping we can choose between roughly 15 types of milk. We expose our life situations to others in never ending ways through social

media, read about it in magazines and so forth. The escalation of considering ourselves as own, free-willed individuals also emphasizes, at the same time intrigues us, with general evoking of interest in the collective. Wilkinson (2010) notes that through social media networks solidarity and community aspects have become even more important to us than previously. This underlines that individualization is not be regarded as an ephemeral trend; it is a shift in our attitude and interests (Ulrich Beck and Norbert Elias are amongst those that argue for this). Continuing Wilkinson's argumentation, the reposition of our persona to merely being an individual stands in close connection with an increased awareness and interest for collective and community shaping factors in society. They both seem to occur in parallel. This contributes to the augmented attention for cooperative housing, and might not only be explained due to economical reasons. As Wilkinson (2010) sees it, since we express ourselves, and our persona, in several fora, we bond with other persons, create networks and take part, voluntarily or not, in a multitude of communities. Often on loose grounds, we do not search for intimate relations there.

Wilkinson's communities are easily generated and short lived. Sennett is making us aware of this as he writes that communities are easily created, and the life within them can ephemerally be successful, however, to create co-operation is harder. He states that co-operation takes time to establish and needs a stabile platform for its continuous survival (Sennett, 2009, p. 4). Back to the issues of dwelling, we can see that several cohousing projects, in order to survive, partly base their communal constructs on a generally pragmatic ground. Some examples of this are common cooking arrangements, shared maintenance and similar activities, to obtain a social life. This theme is recurrent in several of the chapters in this thesis, trying to understand the basis and formation of the community within residences but also how it continues.



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The issue that to a large extent pushed us in to individualization is the ability to customize. Specifically, turning towards the industry and its adaptability of general production lines. Quickly and easily it is possible to adjust production to any precondition (Casanova and Hernandez, 2008). That is, it is possible to tailor-make almost anything in a large scale. What Casanova and Hernandez (2008) are missing with these possibilities is a diversification of the production lines of residential units. It is possible, but few architects, developers or residents are occupied with it. They state that they have not seen a change of the residence in almost a century; we still linger with the modernist housing type with few communal and integrative aspects.

“...if we compare the high degree of personalization of every product or service developed in our current society with the minimum level of personalization of the housing we can conclude that the relation between society products and housing is definitively broken.” (Casanova and Hernandez, 2008)

The duplicity between the residence as something expressing our personality and an object of consumption makes the dwelling an important case study also in understanding ourselves (see Hagbert, 2010), however, that it is exposed for standardization diminish personalization.

As briefly seen, processes of individualization have many facets and are apparent on many fronts in society. Having both better and worse sides, it is a shift that we will have to accept and cannot escape from. Perhaps praising it as an opportunity to tailor-make and adapt to every possible scenario, there is challenging possibility. At the same time it risks isolating us and tearing us apart. Beck-Gernsheim argues that our lives are more and more becoming isolated biographies (to use the author's term) in a world with fewer intersections of social paths. We search for support;

previously the domestic and familial, now new formations replace this, as the family is no longer represented by the bourgeois domesticity we have known during the last century (Beck et al. 2001, p. 130). These aspects touched upon so far are general with an emphasis on choices and the lack of it in our residences. A question is how it appears in a Swedish context and how we regard our dwellings. Probably even stronger connected to the main question, does the individual focus reach to our social connections as well, and do we personalize and individualize even those? The consequence of this is obviously an establishment of chosen social contracts, that are the foundation of society, and that this reaches to the social communities on a small scale is probably evident. This is an issue that will be recurring throughout the work. So, how does sociality appear in our context?

A Swedish way?

In relation to the individual and the collective, it is intriguing to see that Sweden is amongst the nations in Europe where individualization is most apparent. The single person household is the most common here amongst all European countries. At the same time, there are few countries where co-living without being married is as frequent as in Sweden, not only with a partner but also with friends (Daun, 2005, pp. 121-124). The idea, or prejudice, that Swedes have problem inter-connecting, but sharing fully with another person is known. However, Daun also notes that attending courses, study groups and other organized activities are activities more popular in Sweden than elsewhere. Often, experience from taking part in associations is seen as a precondition to successfully join a residential community (ibid. p. 125 & Berggren et al., 2006, p. 359).

Together with the observation that collaboration and personality are capabilities that are more important than academic merits and charisma to most Swedes, cooperative and community aspects in housing would seem obviously important as well as easily manageable in a Swedish context. As stated, being a country that rather late was urbanized in comparison to its European neighbours and equivalents, there is a debatable, “village-mentality” lingering in society (Daun, 2005, p. 125 *and* Asplund, 1984, p. 96). Yet, another aspect that would contribute to explain why cooperative housing and community aspects in residential areas have gained interest and is continuing to intrigue dwellers and researchers in Sweden. However, why it is not as widely implemented as it has the socially anchored ability to be is an issue lingering for an answer.

The American writer Putnam states that we participate in many activities, study groups and so forth today. A leader or chairman leads an increased number of them (Putnam, 2000, p. 184). This is stated in an

American context, different from a Swedish or Western European, but it points at a development where social values and community life is starting to become an incapacity. Comparing with Wilkinson's observations that participation in community life is increasing in social media (which is built upon a communitarian involvement), one could note that we consume and live community, leaving less time for more effort demanding cooperation, possibly resulting in problems on levels in society as well.

The duplicity between the collective and individual are as seen dependent upon each other. Inevitably, we have to regard them as being important for one another. Moreover, the processes of individualization are not fully maximized and the question is if it ever will be (Asplund, 1984, p. 96). Social bonds are looser and weaker, at the same time they are increasing in number. The relation to each other as well as to community, cooperation and society is interestingly highlighted with Tönnies' theory of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, introduced in 1887. The latter incorporating aspects of the fact that we intend to make the individual dictate specific needs and being a point of reference. Apparently, we want to take care of our own lives and needs, but shortly we see *Gemeinschaft* as a utopian way of living were social bonds are an important security network (Asplund, 1984, p. 107). Not choosing to see them as different polarizations, but rather two contrasting aspects deal with the significance and presence of both. This theme will be used to investigate social relations to and the individual's role in society.

Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

“From birth, one is living, according to Tönnies, in community (Gemeinschaft) with your family. You step out into society (Gesellschaft) as to a foreign country.”
(Asplund, 1970, p. 84, translation by author)

The ideas of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are an interesting theory and are connected to individualization and collective ideas, but what role does it have? Recalling Asplund that explains it historically with the shift that came with the industrial era: society changed (simplified) from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft.

The terms have been translated as community and society, and most recently community and civil society⁴. It is arguable whether this translation is accurate or not, however the two words appear close connected to aspects of collectiveness and individualization. Prejudicially, collective housing, cohousing and cooperation are referred to as being part of a community; a yearning for a previous society is therefore interesting to bear in mind. Hence, hypothetically that cohousing could be a reaction to modern individualistic society, a Gesellschaft, and a desire for Gemeinschaft. Asplund means that the antagonism between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft often is obvious within architecture, making them interesting and beneficial for discussion (Asplund, 1991). Noteworthy is the opposition that Asplund refers to, as if the two terms stand against each other. The two could also be regarded as reliant upon each other, forming dialectic interplay. How this transformation succeeds will be addressed.

4 In the translation by Harris (and Hollis) from 2001, they choose to add the term *civil* in front of society as a translation by Gesellschaft, distinguishing it from the more “small scale” association. Tönnies implied perhaps the both, even though Harris suggests that the overall, global civilisation is more accurate. Asplund (1991) also intrigues the reader with the multitude of meanings the title has. That is why I have chosen to use the original German words, not implying other aspects with the English versions.

Asplund means that with the modern era, linear definitions (that run parallel, but seldom intersect) of what a person is transformed society into a *Gesellschaft*. Before modern times, people (note the Swedish term: *allmogen*) did not count, and regard, time or resources as we do today (Asplund, 1983, p. 108). The domestic village community together took care of duties and distributed assets commonly and dependence was high. As often stated, we are time wise not far away from this society, even though urbanization and industrialization has changed our presence deeply. However, in these times social control was important and hierarchies that were hard to break out of dominated, making it difficult for dissidents to avoid stigmatization (Gromark, 1984, pp. 181-182).

Asplund tries to make sense of Tönnies' two terms as he states that *Gemeinschaft* symbolize "a natural and unplanned social unity: an organism", on the other side, the *Gesellschaft* is something "determined and artificial: a mechanism" (Asplund, 1991, p. 67). Furthermore, in *Gesellschaft*, people only represent themselves and their own actions or beliefs aiming for competition and profit (Asplund, 1991, pp. 74-76). In *Gemeinschaft* on the other hand, the aims are the collective in itself and the common production and work; there is no need for individuality. The result, or outcome, is not the aim, rather the action (Asplund, 1991, pp. 76-79). Tönnies' opposed the development from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, as he tied many romantic and social abilities to the prior and at first *Gemeinschaft* would probably seem more attractive. On the contrary, a modern society, *Gesellschaft* must be an attractive option to the other (*ibid.* p. 58) and form a social contract of relaxed control that maintains a stable society (*ibid.* p. 57 and Berggren et al., 2009, p. 388).

It could be described as two different views upon the individual and her ideas are present. There are the unself-conscious kind, which just exists and evolves in *Gemeinschaft*, and the self-conscious kind, which is manufactured

by ideals, life and culture in Gesellschaft (Westin, 2014). Supportive for theories and aspects of individualization, the Gesellschaft-person is indeed present, in an obvious sense. What the two terms seem to have in common is the relation to the collective. To a certain extent, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are collective constructs that aim for something, however, the means are different and the perception of the collective whether it consists of individuals or not. They could both be regarded as processes, rather than states, in social actions (Gromark, 1984, p. 70). Asplund notes that in Gesellschaft all humans are free but are exposed to competition and concurrence, the opposite would be control and strictly controlled social ties (Asplund, 1991, p. 75).

That a romanticized Gemeinschaft is something to strive for is not necessarily the case, and not a goal of its own. It is the interplay between the two, the processes and the interdependency that attracts the most discussions; Asplund means that talking about one of them, the other one is always present between the lines (1991, p. 31, 78), also as social constructs. They are a dichotomy.

Back to the question of cohousing, which per definition is about sharing, at least partly. The participants often share duties, experiences and a common life together. At first, a quick glance would relate it to Gemeinschaft, with its communal and familial aspects. This categorization is arbitrary and only explains cohousing to a certain extent as a phenomenon separate from other societal development, which would belong to Gesellschaft (Asplund, 1991, p. 73). Sara Westin explains why it might not be as presupposed: cohousing is neither of the two (Westin, 2014). Cohousing is usually based on a collaborative ground, i.e. the residents share responsibilities for cooking, cleaning and so on. In short, a motivating aspect for living in a cohousing unit could therefore be to save money, and time: a Gesellschaft ideal. As an opposite, the work is rendered important as creating the

sociality, a Gemeinschaft aspect. Additionally, the residents often see the neighbours as friends or “co-livers” and the aspects of belonging in a group or community are considered important, rather than domesticity (see the interview section). Accordingly, one could argue that cohousing is neither of the two, rather part of dialectic interplay between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. As Asplund writes, it is possible to search for and appreciate company of a Gesellschaft, but not a Gemeinschaft, which is to be perceived as an organically formed interplay (Asplund 1970, pp. 84-85).

This categorization, or inability to position cohousing on a certain point in this (far too linear) span, is exemplified with the case studies described in the essay. In a cohousing unit residents usually have own personal fully equipped apartments, with bathroom, kitchen and bedroom and a lot of time is spent there. Therefore, the private space is important and not something that is shared. Several of the interviewees in the case studies also refer to the fact of regarding each other not as close friends, but neighbours or “co-livers”. The community could therefore not be regarded as a replacement for the family or the community of the personal inner circle. On the other hand, common duties are shared: cleaning, care taking and cooking and groups organize studies or activities. However, these activities strengthen bonds within the community and are performed on a semi-voluntary basis. They create something more than just an ordinary living with more communality and social life. Due to this, one could argue that cohousing is not only about aiming for result and profit. It is neither based on Gemeinschaft, nor Gesellschaft (Westin, 2014 and Asplund, 1991, p. 76).

An aspect that could deconstruct the use of Tönnies’ theory is that postmodernity has provided us with an abundance of choices (see Beck’s arguments in previous chapters), at the same time we have no choice but to choose our social connections. This shows that Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft indeed are valid to describe and classify social bonds.

What is arguable is that cohousing, or residential community could be categorized as the dialectic interplay between the opposites collectivism and individualization, or Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. Might it be that the stronger the polarization is, the stronger this dialectic interplay will grow? To understand why a few, still some, people search for residential community, we will look closer at the overall benefits of it, also to explain how it is forming sustainable and resilient environments.



Hähnig und Gemmeke Freie Architekten BDA, 2007. Model for housing project in Mühlenviertel, Tübingen.

The beneficial community

This chapter explains many of the positive aspects of living in a community, mainly social issues but also with references to economical and spatial factors. There are many advantages with living in a social context, were many “ties”⁵ bridge social segregation and spread information, creating a living community (Olsson et al. 1997, p. 53). What we merit from communal aspects may seem obvious, at the same time communal benefits reach to levels that are not as clear as they seem. Linkage to a social group improves the feeling of belonging and strengthens the connection to a certain place, maybe the place that we most commonly call home. Being part of something “bigger” extends the ordinary life routines and effects an overall well bring.

Elderly that stay in homes in areas where community aspects are evident are healthier, happier and can take care of themselves longer without home service assistance. This can be seen in cohousing units as well as in residential blocks where there are common or shared facilities (Paulsson, 2008, p. 47). This is beneficial for society on an overall scale as well; if people are healthier and have the possibility to stay home longer in life resources are saved.

In times when square metres are expensive, both in economically and sustainably, a reduced amount of used space per apartment has advantages. Increased amount of commune areas in buildings, such as common living rooms or kitchens, enable a decrease of private floor area within each residential unit. This is why common areas are often successful in residences where the apartments are generally small (considering categorized homes such as students’ residences or elderly homes which have facilities for

5 The concept of “the strength of the weak ties” was introduced by the sociologist Granovetter in 1973

communal use within the building and smaller apartments on average). Theoretically, this is applicable for cooperative housing, where it is directly possible to see that square metres “saved” within the apartment, also saves money and naturally, common facilities can be cheaper if they are jointly paid for. There are also notable tendencies that with a small apartment, it is more likely that residents will use the common area more often, equipment that does not fit in the regular apartment could be offered in another place within the building. A small survey from Chalmers show that future residents of a building cooperative consider smaller residences if common spaces were created elsewhere, especially if the overall cost remained or diminished (Andersson, 2013, p. 48).

Additionally to the merits of community, it is possible to outline positive aspects of participatory processes that often form communities. Many of the successful projects involving a strong community share the common fact that they have been developed through resident’s participation, either entirely or partly (three out of four case studies have been developed jointly). Resident’s participation is both successful but also time consuming and demands effort from people involved. Noteworthy at present times are the German Baugemeinschaften, which are experiencing a heyday of public interest and the more people, at least architects inform themselves about this, the more benefits tend to be discussed. The gains of resident’s participation seem to be many; nevertheless, it is demanding. For example, the residential building Bo100 in Malmö, Sweden, was designed according to the future tenants needs and wishes (see study visits chapter as well). However, the architects had to spend an excessive amount of hours in order to make sure it would all come together, together with the tenants. The architect I. Waldhör says that as the same time as it was a reaction to an insufficient inclusion of the users, no more examples alike were realized (Waldhör, 2014). Another extreme are NCC’s “Folkboende” or the IKEA-

example “BoKlok”, two ready-to-build concepts where number of floors and apartments can be adjusted to the conditions of a specific site. With an unvaried appearance the result tend to be uniform lifestyles.

Benefits of participation in design process can be seen from many different angles and perspectives. Sanoff (2000, p. 185) points at some of the most striking advantages:

everybody involved have an understanding for social
needs amongst the users
consequences and advantages of the design are
understood by participants, making the solutions clear
and transparent
the professionals obtain updated information that are
anchored in the reality

Sanoff’s advantages are brought forward as social bonds and awareness about each other result in an understanding for each other’s situation. There is something that the involved are sharing and gives them a common ground (a buzz word in the field, especially in Sanoff’s writing). Projects created through participation often house strong and lively communities: the building symbolizes both the process and the community life (see the interview study, specifically Bo100 and Stacken).

Surveys amongst residents in Austria during the 80’s contributes to explaining the positive outcomes of participation, a majority thought that it was important to take part in planning processes and believed that their residences suited them to a greater extent after completion. Jointly, they agreed upon that the community within the buildings became stronger than otherwise. These advantages were due to the fact that the architects more easily could make the decisions comprehensible and the decisions were more easily coordinated as they (the architects) worked directly with the future dwellers (Freisitzer et al., 1987, p. 17-19). The residents generally

believed that participation was a positive thing, but required a lot of time. An important aspect that came out of the studies was the fact that many of the residents appreciated the social gains of the processes and they experienced an increased social integration afterwards.

“Wir wollen nicht mehr aneinander vorbeiwohnen,
sondern miteinander wohnen.” (Freisitzer et al., 1987,
p. 15)

Through participation, or aware-making, the gap between the residents, the architects and the developers and suppliers of housing can be avoided. Herreros writes in a manifesto for public housing, suggesting that general housing development does not fulfil the needs of the people that it is planned for, or their social life (a theme touched upon before). Amongst other things, he points to the fact that family patterns are changing and becoming more instable and he sees a diminishing interest in questions regarding public and private. The critique towards the present development is obvious as it is not about reorganizing domestic space (which he believes to be necessary); neither anchors it in contemporary concerns (Herreros, 2007, p. 16). The fact that people are not involved in the planning has detached the residence from whom it is aimed for. Moreover, Herreros cannot see a relationship, which he claims necessary, from the single living unit to the collective or public life that should be lived outside. Often, contemporary development is monofunctional disregarding a collective sense or a communal use. More frequently than seldom, current residential units are a rejection of hybridization and participation at an urban scale where there are spaces for other facilities (p.17). A hybridization that would strengthen both use and resilient factors (social and economical) in urban development and would ensure a longer lifespan for anything built (2007, pp. 15-21).

As an interesting comparison to Herreros critique, the office *Casanova + Hernandez* has worked with this integration as a main theme for a residential block in Groningen, the Netherlands. By adding a health facility, and distribute assisted living units amongst ordinary dwellings, a socially sustainable aim is achieved. Hence, it avoids psychological as well as physiological stigmatization of the residents in need of care, the elderly and disabled and it has created awareness amongst residents in the block for each other's needs. This diversification situates the project in a contemporary concern avoiding a functional separation, maybe not dealing with participation in the formation process of the building, but in the life of the building.

To sum up this section, several ideas that deal with our relationship between the individual and the community have been presented, together with a first glance at cohousing. This has been done partly by studying its historical context, together with showing why and how residents search for residential community and its benefits. The theories presented will be used as a baseline for investigating the residential community and what it means with the case studies.





#3

contextualization

Introduction section #3

This part of the thesis aims at projecting the objectives of community into a context, mainly a Swedish or European. The exemplification springs from current residential situations and development. Often, the themes in the different chapters are twined into those of the first section, but here the focus is on describing the residential situation, both generally as well as for projects that aim for lifting community to front. It shows why residents look for community and why these examples is a reaction to and explains the insufficiency of an overall residential development. In order to deepen the view upon (at times marginal) community housing and community creating aspects critical reflections are included. Also, a gender perspective on the topic is concisely added: a majority of residents and researchers in the subject are female, which is a noticeable difference.

Towards the end of this second part, extractions from this and the previous section are described as abbreviations. These are lifted into the third section to reflect and compare the different case studies presented.

Housing as of today

As in many European countries, the construction of (multi-family) homes has reached stagnation. There are just a few main industrial developers constructing residences, at the same time there is a shortage of housing. It might seem as a golden opportunity for development, but it appears not to be. Often, alternative ways of tenures are pushed aside, as developers consider the main goal to be to invest in a property, and consequently make profit (Boverket, 2013, p. 38). In Swedish media, it is possible to find articles talking about a lack of housing on almost a daily basis.⁶ A look at the website of some major residential producers in Sweden (e.g. JM, Skanska or NCC) shows another side. A lot of sustainable residential production for the future is advertised. As noted previously, the scene seems to be split between the developers on one side, and the residents on the other. This gap between miscorrelating interests goes back, at least to the early 90's, as we will see. Today's property development is mainly based upon the demands of the market and occurs through investigating the future dweller and regarding him or her as a [wealthy] client. It is a shift from 50 years ago when the development focused on regarding us as people that "ran a household", comparing it with today as we are being clients buying and selling goods at a market.

Ibelings (2014) expresses it as the peaks of social and public housing developed by the state, as well as collective housing maintained by a public realm, is no longer present in most parts of Europe. Interestingly though, he relates this development to a timeline.

“...it was a relatively short interlude in the history of architecture. It did not exist before 1900 and it turns

6 The topic is for example brought up by the popular magazine *Nöjesguiden*, devoting an entire issue to "The residential crisis" (issue 2, 2014)

out, it has disappeared” (in correspondence with Ibelings, 2014)

Stating this, Ibelings points at the gap, which has come forth between developers and dwellers, there does not seem to be else than profit dictating. The development is historically linked to the shifts described earlier, where the rural society was turned into another one controlled by monetary flows and an individualistic mind.

A closer look at the present gap between the builder and the dweller reveals a contemporary debate about who is building and for whom. Both Balatchew (2013) and Forsell (2013) pose the question: for which people the major contemporary housing development is aimed. Both of them are searching for new stakeholders to enter the field of property development, even though they regard it slightly different. Belatchew on her side suggests that architects should not fear to position themselves in the role of developers that carry out investments, whilst Forsell believes that municipalities and the state once more must enter the scene and take more action and responsibility. Which solution is most appropriate is not said, and maybe not even interesting, but that someone addressing attention to something else than economical gains is probably necessary. In a present state it is more interesting to gain money and keep the supply and demand on a profitable level. Moreover, both of them agree that another, parallel way of developing residential units would give a more differentiated and diversified development, more suitable for the diversity and variation we see today.

In a majority of contemporary housing construction, the developers keep a role model resident in mind as a target client, generally someone with a medium high income (Nylander, 2007 p. 52). Immigrants and people that belong to other stigmatized groups in society have not been considered in these measurements or surveys (Nylander, 2011), therefore “the average

person” is not even on a par with the general population. Additionally, more frequent than seldom the individual flat is prioritized over the shared or semi public. This development could lead to unsafe and unprotected environments, as the communal ties to the context are lost as residences only turn inwards, not including public life (Olsson, 2007).

Casanova and Hernandez (2008) bring up the aspect, of what they call it, a current *detraditionalization*. New ways of living and residing demands for new typologies. When combining existing typologies, they argue that new solutions can be achieved that deal with aspects of collectivism and individuality in society. This will, in their view, promote social bonds, as well as enrich the urban contexts, as in their previously presented residential block in Groningen. Furthermore, adding self-adaptation to this enables dwellers to suit their residence to specific life situations: that is increased individuality in comparison to today’s development (Casanova and Hernandez, 2008).

As discussed previously, the urge to determine our individualization and personalization could possibly lead to an increased level of collective and commune ways of living. Casanova and Hernandez come down to this idea as well, as they believe that individualization is strongly linked to ideas of collectiveness. Shortly, they mean that fragments of individuality that together form a collective identity create every urban situation (Casanova and Hernandez, 2008). Interestingly, they underline the individuals’ participation in forming collectiveness. If there is a missing part in this puzzle, the picture cannot be completed, whether it is the individual or collective. The question arises: if we cannot individualize our residence, can we generate a collective identity? Community, collaboration and cooperation can easily vanish if primary needs are foreseen. To a certain extent, people have to take the development in their own hands, but how do the preconditions look?

Understanding Sweden

Boverket (The Swedish national board of housing, building and planning) annually describes the residential situation in Sweden, which in this chapter will create an understanding for the reason behind private community development. Through surveys to Swedish municipalities they analyse the current state. In 2013, the result was as expected due to trends from previous years, 45 % of the responding municipalities stated a lack of dwellings in total and 85 % referred to a lack of rental apartments in total (Boverket, 2013). The numbers seem shocking and high, even though it has diminished slightly from previous years. Obviously, the balance between the number of dwellings available and their configuration is not equivalent.

What else is clear is that for young adults, families with children, elderly and people looking for a smaller dwelling the shortages are the highest. This proves that a more flexible and diversified housing stock is needed, that can meet the lifestyle changes we go through in a lifetime. The report shows that these groups does not have the financial capabilities as other ones to obtain an appropriate dwelling, suggesting that the stock as well as production does not correspond to the request. In addition, the report says that there is a need for housing in attractive locations, i.e. in the vicinity of care facilities, education and transportation. Looking back at the groups that expressed the highest shortage, it is the same ones that are in need of staying close to these. Hence, their residential situation is stigmatized and has apparently been so for a number of years. These groups are also taking the development in own hands moving to various forms of cohousing to a greater extent.

This strengthens the opinions presented in previous chapters that it is necessary with additional ways of constructing residences, rather than relying on big companies constructing for nonexistent role models. As

the report states, the municipalities have power over situation; many of them own the land where new residential units can be built (Boverket, 2013, p. 38). It is not a coincidence that the target groups experiencing a shortage of residences also are the ones that benefit the most from living in communities, where services in daily life can be procured in a collective way (for example caring for children together, escape loneliness as older or younger). Problematically, the general supply of residences, at least newly constructed, is, made by a few big companies specialized in residential development and on an (usually) economic basis. The shortage is as stated by Boverket, not taken care off by itself and municipalities, but to a certain extent by economy with supply and demand as guiding. Naturally, companies act on a market where positive figures are important, rather than meeting a demand. However, the shortage is not the market's matter but a public one: that is why more ways of production as well as ownership and acquirements are important to take into consideration.

To further understand the Swedish, and probably Western European context, it is necessary to understand and discuss who supplies us with our residences today and why it is done without involvement of future dwellers and little communal effort. Developers procure the supply of residences, that is, industry and economy is something to deal with.

Industrial and economic constructs

In a Swedish context it is easy to see the dominance of a few big companies occupied in residential development that use familiar methods and ways of working: there is an emphasis on industrial construction. Generally, the focus for the property developers is to maximize gain and profit and of course to have a stabile source of income, because who pays for including users, uncertainty and time consuming planning? A chocking example is the multi family home concept “Folkbostaden” (“the people’s home”) by NCC that can be combined in few, but different, ways and has a rentable part of square metres that is 76% of the building (NCC, 2014). This leads to a layout with a minimal amount of commune spaces and the total depth of the building results in dark rooms, without access to daylight as a consequence of maximizing square metre use. The building is designed in order to be profitable within a year from its construction; it is easy to see the glitch between planning, gains, outcome and the dwellers. The building is not only a sure and stabile income for a construction company; it is also marketed as such implying it is not a home for social life, rather for investing money.

Apparently, we have experienced a turn of the general development, which nowadays is oriented towards a market with industrialized construction. Lauri (2012, pp. 53-57) states that this turn came after the Bo01 (not to be confused with the Bo100 project 10 years earlier) exhibition in Malmö and the development of Hammarby Sjöstad in Stockholm: at the time the interest for pre-fabrication was big and enthusiastic (forgetting the 70’s industrial development, but it is interesting to remember Casanova and Hernandez fascination for industrialisation and adaptation). This development turned out to move the position of power of property development from dwellers and architects to industry and contractors. The author further refers to one



BoKlok, 2014. The multifamily home "Älmhult in yellow". A home for everyone?

of the developers (JM) saying that their customers are satisfied with the current state and that they are building with a smaller cost “than before”. The cuts are perhaps in the social life, forcing a few eager to procure this themselves, but what happens for the rest? He ends the article with writing that rationality often is put forward as a quality rather than development, research or diversity within the building stock (*ibid.*). Also Nylander (2003, p. 52) states that the main production of housing (since the 90’s) is by big companies and the development is based on market polls from selected people, and not real investigations.

Nylander (2003, pp. 52-54) has one explanation to why big companies have become so powerful in Sweden. It is due to the fact that the government withdraw subsidies in the 90’s. Construction companies, such as JM or NCC, found their niche as they started focusing on development for wealthy people in fairly exclusive areas. At the same time the rental, municipal housing ended up with a large amount of flats where no one wanted to live. He states that there are few initiatives for low cost housing, but remarkably the company Skanska and IKEA have launched a common concept, known as BoKlok. These low-rise homes are designed to be cheap, efficient and easily constructed. The typical target person is a single mother with a low income. Askegård (2002, p. 35) has analysed the BoKlok residence as being efficient in its use of square metres, and is perfectly adapted to surveys done by IKEA, with a conclusion that Swedes like their home being traditional yet varied. However, it is questionable if these residences develop the market or challenge beliefs about our dwelling, since they are static in their format and expression, and affirm different ways of living and societal constructs. They have little space for community life, only focusing on the individual apartment. An interesting interlude in the debate of creating a home that is suitable for everyone, though fixed in its appearance.

In relation to an industrial building sector and the progression of residential projects it is interesting to see how general production of goods has developed during the 20th century. Mattsson describes how production of goods is based upon polls and surveys, and became so during the post war area. As well as being a very democratic way of supplying the market with things, it objectifies the private and makes it tradable, the power lies amongst the producers since they create the actual demand. (Mattsson, 2004, pp. 116-152). She argues that this is similar to how architecture is perceived since the 1950's.

This shift is to a great extent placed in the aspect that the dweller is not a person looking for shelter, but more commonly a consumer of luxurious space, just as someone staying in a hotel or resort (Ibelings, 2009, p. 241). Social, commune areas in those projects are exclusively produced for explicit use by the inhabitants that share the same preconditions and therefore turning its back at a resilient urban situation. Concluding, one could state that the power of the space for dwelling is in the hands of the seller and buyer, the one with the better economic situation. That industry and economy are in control over the development is obvious, but there are wishes and aims to conduct the supply differently.



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Gilla

Kommentera

Dela

Necessities for diversification

Commonly, and often discussed are aspects of how to achieve an ecologically, economically and socially sustainable urban development. Shortly, a resilience that makes tenants appreciate and involve in their residential areas, enforcing inclusion and integration. However, the market controls the situation and other development usually progress apart from the ordinary as an act of desperation. These words are used extensively today (not seldom it is relevant to discuss a “green-wash” effect), but what are the general aims, specifically in Sweden, and needs of the residential sector? There are of course political aims, ideas and theories on how to supply the population with adequate housing and generally they are often similar in regards of outcome: the socialist politicians are promoting ideas of governmental subsidies, whilst their opponents more actively are encouraging the open market, but all are talking about a diversified residential market (Debatt, 2014). Amongst architects and in an architectural discourse, the idea is often that there is an overall view, a zoomed out perspective of the current state, missing.

The Swedish association of architects (Sveriges Arkitekter) is supporting and pushing this debate forward, at least at times. In their suggestion for a new policy for architectural development one can find suggestions for diversification, integration and participation. It is stated that a variation in the residence is important, as well as participation and non-residential meeting points, such as public venues. Regarding the residence itself, it is argued that the population in Sweden does not adequately fit their dwellings, the same conclusion as Boverket promote. A diverse and pluralized development is regarded as a key factor, together with inviting more actors into the market (Sveriges Arkitekter, 2009, pp. 48-59). Seemingly, the association revolves from the market orientation of today's



Axelsson, J., 2014. Newly constructed houses in Åby, Mölndal.
Similar residences to house conform families?

development and management. It could be a strong idealistic point towards the government and municipalities, but how to progress is quite unsaid, probably, it means to rely on some kind of other development.

Connected to this are aims of the mixed-use city, which is very much à la mode today, and many politicians refer to this as solving problems of integration and achieving diversity. Most certainly, it is a possible way (whether it is successful or not is not discussed here). Nonetheless, property development today is often mono-functional and large scale, not reflecting that political aim. Few discuss for whom the actual residential development is aimed. A fact Jacobs referred to already in 1962 in the book *"The life and death of great American cities"*. The municipality of Gothenburg (Fastighetskontoret, 2012) describes several facts, or problems, that the city is working with. Most strikingly is probably the aspect of integration as well as the lack of adaptability of the residential market in general. One main aspect is to solve the problem of segregation (both social, ethnical and economical) in the residential sector is to "have a mix of various tenures" as well as to ensure that it is possible to live within the same area in the city, even though we experience changes in living situations. This implies that there should be residences suitable for families in central locations, apartments in areas with concentration of single-family homes and so forth. Additionally, a key aspect is to create socially sustainable areas and well being of residents in the city, the community is an important part of this.

Many municipalities have aims to diversify forms of tenure and residences, but progression is slow (Boverket, 2013, p. 38). Nylander and Braide Eriksson have conducted surveys among immigrants in Gothenburg on how well their residences suite their way of living, with a result that is both positive and negative. Some highlighted issues are that some of the respondents are living crowdedly according to current norms (Nylander et

al., 2011, p. 102, p. 109). Another aspect is that the apartments do not match the wishes of spatial configurations from the residents. Many call for having separate public and private parts, which is not possible with the existing floor plans in the area. The layouts of the homes are described as mixed and at times not adapted to the life the residents want to live (ibid., p. 99). There are obviously few possibilities to change the apartment, or adopt it to the family situation (expanding, renting a room or dividing the apartment). In some cases, they are too small to fit the whole family situation and with no bigger apartments in the respective area. Regarding the residential community in the area, the survey gives answers from positive descriptions of loose connections with the neighbours, as well as not knowing others resulting in a lack of feelings of safety. The little neighbourhood is both seen as something positive and negative in the report, there are social patterns that are hard to maintain due no adapted spaces.

If these are aims and needs to multiply the residential development, one can question what actually is happening.

Another way of creating residences

Questioning present residential development is multifaceted and at times never-ending. The Dutch architect N. J. Habraken goes as far as even questioning the position of the architect, and in a longer chain, the development of housing as architecture, perhaps not so contextual. Unforgettably is that in most parts of the world, housing is not regarded as “architecture”, at least not in our view, historically it was not in the Western world either (Habraken, 1998). Certain small-scale development, such as single-family housing, is often closer to the user, however not as common as it has the potential to be.

Since the residence is something that shapes our identity as individuals, its structure and appearance needs to suit and adapt to the way we live (Hagbert, 2010). A wider spectrum on residential development, apart from the standardized, is therefore relevant and important. The interest that both collective housing as well as cooperatively built dwellings have gained over the last years, suggests that these issues are important to put forward to an architectural discourse. Notable are many articles, as well as books and blogs about new ways of creating residences, they often have in common that it is necessary to possess the development.

The exhibition UngBo12 in Malmö 2012, questioned residential development for young adults in Sweden. A prioritized fact that was seen in many of the proposals delivered to the conference (as well as the theme) was an interest and majority of collective ideas. Yet another argument for that community and collective values are important in residences and our homes (Ungbo12, 2014). This theme is also recurrent in the European 13 competition, as it is emphasising the adaptable city and the relations between actors, contents and processes: that is discussions about who and why is constructing (European 13, 2014).

The wish and desire to live and develop living apart from the standard

or common gain interest, at least in certain social groups in society. Quite easily it is done within the single family detached home, however, striving to live in community and together with others require more living units to be put together: a multi family home. Occasionally, people that are ageing and want to avoid institutions believe that cohousing is an attractive living form. It provides control over the residence and a socially important situation or context that is attractive. However, not only seniors are interested in the issues, also cooperative housing has gained interest amongst families, not widely implemented yet though. In Germany large urban neighbourhoods have been developed with cooperative ways of residing with the Baugemeinschaften (Ruby, 2009, p. 245). People living alone in small apartments, such as students, many times find collective use of spaces beneficial and an attractive way of making social bonds.

There are not only private initiatives for these new types of dwellings falling out of the ordinary. Some offices of architecture have reacted to a stiff building industry as well to prove that residential development can take place to a reasonable cost and with innovative aspects. An example is a multi family residence in Väskegsgatan, Gothenburg. It consists of rentable flats which were produced at a relatively low cost by White architects in collaboration with a property developer. Another interesting example is the Tila housing complex in Helsinki. The architect, Pia Ilonen, gave raw spaces to the future residents, with a possibility to add a mezzanine floor, thus letting them completely decide themselves how they wanted their specific layout. Another frequently published example is the "Urbana Villor" in Malmö, Sweden: a building cooperative, formed by several families in an association. In Germany, this concept has been successful; but facing a development, which mainly relies on personal effort and economy can be problematic. Cohousing units are often formed in the same successful way, but what consequences does this have?

A tidy middle class

As stated, a majority of the housing development is for people that have the resources to buy, or match the demands of the money lending banks. The need for another way of creating residences is obvious. Problematically, not everybody is in the position to direct to, often exclusive, communities.

The architect S. Boeri has seen how living outside the organized and traditional, in stigmatized situations, can create collective values and collaboration. A problem with this is the fact that municipalities, contractors and researchers often have troubles finding ways to provide many people with the physical spaces that are adapted to our current, changeable lifestyles. He means that there is a lack of understanding how communal aspects are perceived, not only informally but also generally. He argues that we still see the family as the base for the collective, disregarding the fact that we migrate for work and new communities where other spectra of collectiveness arise and disappear, beyond our traditional views. Taking Milan as an example, immigrants and an increasing number of homeless people shape communities in abandoned factories and houses, or in large encampments. He argues that the community and the importance of it goes beyond our traditional belief of what the built environment provides us with, and is ignored by a traditionalist planning and construction industry (Boeri, 2009, pp. 253-254). Comparing with Sennett that described community to be easily formed, it is difficult to create cooperation and resilience within these, as they receive no attention or physical space, an incapacity for a real situation.

A withheld aspect of creating residences through participation, especially through a cooperative building group, is that the economic investment generally becomes lower. This has been an objective, as valuable as any, for many cooperative building groups in German cities, where possession

of properties is comparatively expensive. The main reason for this is that there is no economic speculation in the projects; no one is making any profit, which is the case in other forms of residential development. Another objective is that owning a property is a stabile and guaranteed investment for the future, as pension plans and the general economy today is unstable and not as trustworthy as they have been (Ruby, 2009, p. 245). The latter is something many Europeans have to consider and review their position about, as there are demographic and structural changes ahead. As development is becoming private, not everyone can afford or have the possibility to take part.

As noted, a major problem for participatory processes is economical, since they demand investments, together with involvement and construction that are time consuming. Finances are additionally hard to solve, since alternative development in the residential sector often is done outside the regular, normal framework. Cooperatives have hard times being accepted by banks to loan money since there are few guarantees, making cooperative development a middle class phenomenon. From a social point of view collective housing, cooperatives and alike are very dependent on the contributors. If groups are socially malfunctioning, it is hard to continue working for the same goal. The communities are vulnerable (which we can see in the interview study in the last section). However, it is important that issues alike are discussed early on in the processes and that the development is as transparent as possible to avoid losing of focus and affect the overall structure (Freisitzer et al., 1987, pp. 22-23).

There is a notable tendency that people are starting to be able to pay for the creation of community. That economy ensures you a better dwelling is not new, but that you pay for a social and organized life is problematic. Examples of this are Baugemeinschaften, cohousing and gated communities. C. Thörn is describing the “lifestyle residence”, or gated community,

Victoria Park in Limhamn, Malmö. As a residence for wealthy, older people it is marketed as a living with a strong community and possibility to live close to available service and leisure areas. This exclusive residential area could be regarded as an object that adds a new typology to the urban configuration and diversifying it, on the other side it generates a demand for segregation and isolation. Thörn fears and rejects this development, as this seclusion contribute to putting residential development in the hands of those who can afford and are able to take part in it (Thörn, 2009b). A situation encountered previously in this text.

“This type of urban development is essentially anti-urban. The uncontrollable city with its temptations and threats is remade to a controllable town.” (Thörn, 2009b)

The problem with these “community areas” is that they ignore the unattractive parts and only allows a certain clique, or rather élite, of society to take part. Unfortunately, it results in buildings that turn inwards and fence off public life and distractions. Co-creation and participatory models in residential development are often close to this, as they easily remind about gated communities (or possibly turn into something alike), consisting of people that want to take their living situation in own hands, thus incorporating the aspects they prefer and choose, avoiding the spontaneous.

Thörn continues by noting that this segregated development is like the ideas that made people move to the suburbs in the 70’s, with an idealistic picture that community would thrive. A difference to the development of segregated living is that the projects often, or risk to, manifest societal structures as people alike start living together that choose each other. The formal formation of the community groups is often based on selection and exclusion (note the third section in the thesis). The ones that cannot



Axelsson, J., 2014. Building under construction in Åby, Mölndal.
One of eleven planned buildings with 400 apartments in total.

choose or does not belong in the picture painted by the clique that can care for themselves are pushed further away in urban development. It is a reaction to the modernist city, according to Thörn, but a chosen reaction where dirt is swept under the carpet (Thörn, 2009a, 2009b). Just as self-creation is a reaction to an insufficient residential development, where people that are able to may contribute. Possibly, the image of co-housing and self-management is positive due to the argument that these projects diversifies the urban structure making room for people that share interests or preconditions. On the other side, they segregate and separate people from each other. At times, as in the case of the almost resort like Victoria Park, features of alienation and segregation are obviously apparent.

Alienation is a threat and risk to many cohousing examples, there is another issue that is important to point at; the fact that several cohousing examples have a majority of female participants. Perhaps not as problematic as the previous, however it must be taken into consideration.

Female equality

Overlooking different case study examples, as well as literature regarding cooperative housing blocks, it is striking that a large amount of interested and occupied with these issues are women. Some of the cooperative housing projects even have difficulties recruiting men, but a lot of women are waiting and enlisted to move in (interviews, 2014). Likewise occurred when Pia Ilonen launched the possibility to apply for an apartment in the Tila housing project, “*mostly women and gay people signed up to live here*” (Ilonen, 2013). How come these residences do not attract men to that extent as they attract women? The building industry is otherwise a very masculine sector, mostly dominated by men. In cohousing and cooperatives, women form groups. Traditionally, gender hierarchies have been influential: the first collective housing projects in Sweden were constructed in order to enable the women to work. Releasing one woman from the household meant replacing her with another one, often with a minimal salary (Caldenby, 1991, pp. 65, 75).

Within the architectural sector, the man has commonly been symbolizing the building and construction, whilst female values rather represent aspects of home or the household (Hagbert, 2011, pp. 38, 121). Sharing spaces and extending the home make women forward position, in a public setting, hence increasing the domains of domesticity. However, this gender categorization is certainly unequal and the question is whether it is relevant in this concern, but many hierarchic patterns are apparent still. It adds to Ilonen’s residential block as well, thus attracting people interested in construction, which would be a typically manly area of interest, it much came down to planning of the home and its domestic appearance probably flattening hierarchies.

Explanations may lie within the fact that women still are occupied with

a lot of traditional women's duties in the course of running a household: that is cleaning, cooking and doing laundry, just to mention a few; I do not appreciate stating it, but it is important to be aware of the fact. This is evident even in cases where men and women are working the same amount of hours per day, especially if the household has children, as women usually or to a great extent are responsible for childcare (Ahrentzen, 1998, p. 632). The advantages of cohousing could possibly attract women that traditionally, and still, are occupied with "motherly duties", as these activities are shared and all inhabitants of the co-housing are a part of the decision-making meetings, perhaps not a masculine way of working. Internationally, the fact that women earn less and take greater responsibility for children are important parts of the explanation why co-housing ideas often gain interest among female groups.

Traditionally, marital status has had an immense impact on how women live, relying on the husband to secure the dwelling. A majority of unmarried women in the United States are renting apartments, comparing to unmarried men that are more often owning theirs, another aspect that show that women globally have less status on the residential market. Secondly, women earn less and usually have lower pensions on an average than their male co-workers, making it harder for them to own their dwellings individually (Kanes Weisman, 1998, p. 184). The possibility to own or buy an apartment is therefore lower for women, due to lower income and a traditional view on possession of residences. A male dominated culture might influence this not only economically but also according to values: men are perhaps less eager, or interested in, renting (co-housing) apartments, due to traditional values and structures that linger in society. Kanes Weisman argues that congregate or cohousing should receive a wider implementation in order to:

“...maximize recreation and neighbourly support;
reduce residential segregation by marital status, age,



Boklok, 2014. A concept for residences developed by IKEA and Skanska based on excessive standardization. The target group are single mothers with low income. What life situations can take place within these residences?

race, and income..." (Kanes Weisman, 1998, p. 186)

A problem described is that in many cases, women are not in decision-making positions in real estate companies or municipalities and are perhaps therefore less occupied with questions of cohousing. (The article is not recently written, however, societal structures are slowly changing and valid still). Cohousing can be regarded as a way of increasing women's possibility to control their residential situation.

That women are more interested in community aspects and cohousing is also a conclusion from a Canadian study from the 1980's. Women and men (employed) usually spent the same amount of hours in the different rooms in their homes, but for different reasons. Men tended to use the domestic spaces for leisurely activities and women used them for social interaction, often including taking care of children, but not solely. Women additionally tend to search more social contact in their domestic environment (Ahrentzen, 1998, p. 632). This is obviously cultural bound, but indicates a tendency that women appreciate and strive for more social interaction and contact in their home environment, another explanation to why community and cohousing seem important to women. To conclude, examining the communities in many built examples, they are flat organizations supporting equal opportunities.



Axelsson, J., 2014. Entrance gate to Bol100, Malmö. The personal expression is apparent also in the urban setting.

Collection of arguments

It is time to summarize some main arguments and statements, before indulging into the case studies and interviews in the third section. The studied objects in the next section, and the criteria extracted from them are to be regarded as aspects showing tendencies for a diversification of the residential sector. It is possible to suggest that the present residential stock does not fulfil the needs and demands we have upon it. However, what is studied in this work are not solutions, rather things that enrich the situation we experience. This part summarizes previous points, from both the more theoretical part as well as from the contextual chapter that focus on today's state.

Firstly, the individual's view must be considered important, and perhaps predominant. As seen, our dwellings are much about belonging, or about experiencing connection. To believe in the area and the residence create strong bonds to them that are important for social interaction and strengthens the social resilience. A socially balanced and sustainable area must envision and materialize this aspect since it is a crucial part of feeling for the place. Without this connection social instability is almost guaranteed, as seen in the studies by Nylander and Braide Eriksson (2011). It is also possible to note in Habraken's argumentation.

“Even within contemporary societies that emphasize individuality, there exists little formal evidence to suggest that this has substantially changed. Citizens still seek to settle into environments where they belong”
(Habraken, 1998, p. 227)

Secondly, the *neutral places* are important, a neutral social arena for the community to operate (Olsson et al., 1997, p. 217). It is hard to imagine

actions taking place that does not have physical space (therefore the point may seem unnecessary), but it is a foreseen feature that is evident and apparent in many cases. One can argue for social sustainability and the importance of community, but it does not succeed only because we live in connection with each other. Different borders and semiprivate areas are a key aspect in order to make people meet spontaneously.

Shortly, we have discussed the important feature, which is a recurrent theme when regarding cohousing and individuality, of a dialectic connection between the community and society. Generalizing, it is possible to argue that the individualization and collective values of today are part of an intangible correlation between the two processes of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as well. Relating the social dimensions of cohousing to this spectrum makes it possible to see a tendency whether the interest for community springs from the fact that society in general has an individualist attitude, and lacking place for community. We can therefore understand to what extent the cohousing examples are a reaction to this. Individualization has probably made us aware of the possibility of taking the residential situation in own hands, as someone else does not procure it to a satisfactory extent. It is arguable that this is a reaction to a more extreme “civil society” as Tönnies calls it, even though his intent perhaps was not to categorize current sociality into polarizations as such (Harris, 2001, p. xxviii).

Connected to the ideas, and ideals, of individualization and community, one could put *co-creation*, or co-building, and *self-management*. These issues are often regarded as a key-point in regarding the residential community and gain a lot of interest in this topic. As before, these issues can be seen as a reaction to an unfulfilled demand of other ways to live or domesticate (Freisitzer et al. 1987). Self-adaptation is furthermore an important part of this as we consider ourselves having mandate to supply ourselves with the residential situation that we need, both with positive (democratic) and

negative (stigmatization) outcomes (James et al., 2009, p. 35). These ideas are interesting to compare with Thörn's critique towards a development where society, and a public sector, is seemingly ignoring a residential situation possibly out of control. As some residents start taking control personally, it results in partly engaging, partly excluding aspects that are unwanted where only those who can pay or have the possibility to take part may do that. It can create resilience and social sustainability; at the same time it oppresses the two. Residents become engaged in the situation and their home but also have more power, which has to be maintained in a careful way (Thörn, 2009a). The question is, where the boarder between the two is positioned.

What is not immediately discussed in the previous material adequately is perhaps *social diversification* and forms of tenure. These topics are briefly mentioned with reference to reports by Boverket (2013) or in the survey amongst immigrants in suburban areas (Nylander et. al, 2011). However, these issues are important, not at least in urban situations in order to achieve socially diversified areas. Nylander and Braide Eriksson states that it is lacking apartments in different sizes in many neighbourhoods, as e.g. families grow out of their apartment and have to leave the neighbourhood or live too many in the same apartment (ibid., p. 102).

The problem remains, and the answer is hard to find, however, to conclude this section, the meaning of cohousing is both a reaction to how society appears, as well as a result of the actual context. The problem remains though, what does it mean to its inhabitants, to the persons living and searching for the community?



#4 the dwellers' view

Introduction section #4

– Actually, we are living crowdedly, now that I think about it. (MF6)

This section presents four different case studies to show implementations of residential communities: from standard housing with shared spaces, to collective and collaborative. This part is founded on an empirical study with interviews and site visits with 20 residents. The projects have to a certain extent been developed outside the normal and are all multi family homes. Together they share examples, interesting qualities and realizations of different aspects that can contribute to a sustainable residential development. However, the community life was more similar than distinguishing.

What should not be neglected are more problematic sides of co-creational development, it is of importance that a cohousing development, beneficial as it is, does not become excluding and anti-urban. Some projects share a tendency of directing inwards ignoring urban diversification as lives are lived within the units (Olsson, 2007, p. 65).

The presented studies and interviews help position community based housing in society together with what it signifies as a resident to live there. Furthermore, it shows what specific needs it is a response to, and why it is important for additional discussion: for whom is this development, and is it as beneficial as we regard it to be? What does it mean to live there?

Formula for decoding interviewees

F=Falun, M=Malmö, P=Partille, G=Gothenburg

The second letter reveals the gender: (M/F)

The third letter is a distinguishing number

E.g.: FF3 equals Falun, female, number three

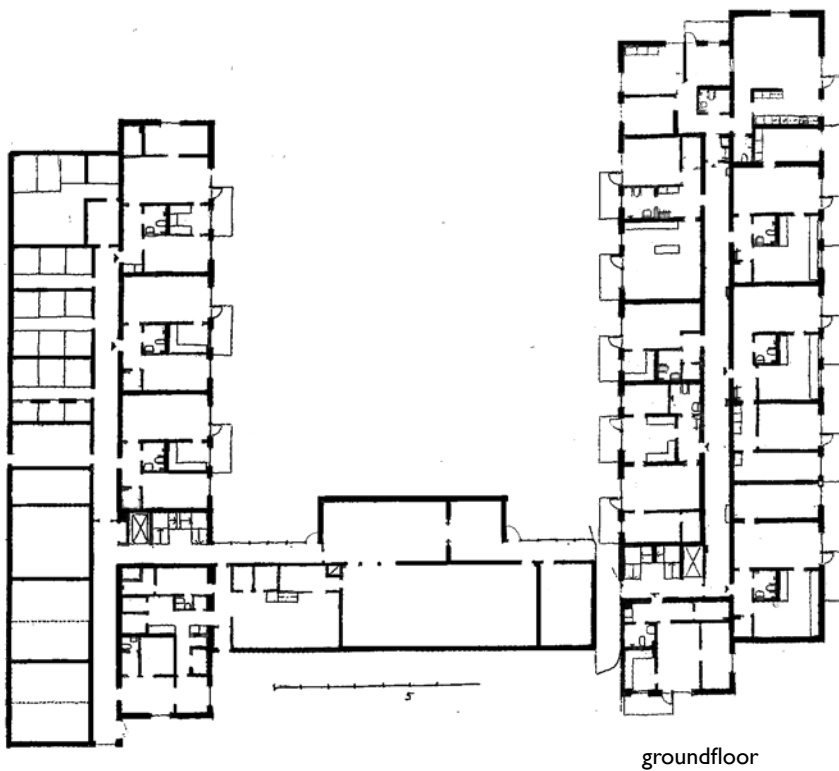
All quotes are translated by the author

Case studies

The four case study objects where the interviews have been conducted are different in how the communal life is lived within them; it spans from people having mandatory obligations to take part in different activities to a more free and liberal view. They share that they all are located in urban regions, either in Gothenburg (Bovieran and Stacken), in Malmö (Bo100) or in Falun (Tersen) and are multi family homes. Two of the projects, Stacken and Bo100 are formed as reactions to an insufficiency of the [at the time] residential scene, with stigmatized residential areas and discontinuity in transferral patterns, but embodying social will and needs amongst the residents, in different ways (Caldenby et al., 1984 and Sager, 1991).

The different objects have consciously not been separated in the transcriptions of the arguments, in order to show that that the view upon the community is alike in a majority of the reasons. For certain questions or aspects separation between the different residential units have been carried out, in order to depict something which is not ubiquitous but specific. Jumping the argumentation ahead, the community is many times alike, and the aim is to explore what it means in an overall sense. It is important to note that all the interviewees have chosen to live in the various residences. This can be due to that they search for community, and also due to the fact that they at times face difficulties finding residences elsewhere according to inadequate forms of tenure or this being the only apartment in the area. That the tenants have applied for apartments in the specific projects often reveals an interesting aspect: they believe that “standard” residences do not offer ways of living that are adequate or sufficient.

The interviewees are mixed in gender and age; to the extent it was possible in the different cases.



Tersen, Falun (Falu kommun)

Tegelvägen 18 A, B

Architect: Sweco/FFNS

Completed in 1964 / 2005

Number of households: 44

Form of tenure: private cooperative leasehold

Interviewees: FF1, FM2, FF3, FM4, FF5

Date of interviews: 22 March 2014

Tersen

Tersen (“The Major Third”) is a cohousing project for residents in the second half of life in mid Sweden (the Dalarna region). The communal living in the residence is based upon the residents’ participation, providing themselves with different services such as common meals, cleaning and the overall maintenance. The idea and its realisation derive from the active work of the founding families, starting in the year 2000. They found a building owned by the municipality, which they partly rented from 2005. On their own they spread the word and more residents became interested and joined the project.

Originally, the building, which is located roughly 1,5 kilometres outside the city centre of Falun, was a building for assisted living that the municipality abandoned and the community could retrofit. From the start it was a private initiative, and eventually the initiators purchased the whole building and transformed it into a joint-stock company. They later sold it to the tenants association, where all residents are members and they now rents it organized as a leasehold-housing cooperative (in interview with M. Mikaelsson, 2014, the following text is also based on his information). The tenants select new residents themselves after applications and interviews, and there is no problems finding new residents as people leave.

The project comprises 44 apartments from 32 up to 77 square metres (one to three rooms and a kitchen), located in two three stories brick buildings connected with a lower part containing common areas of in total 409 square metres. They share a large kitchen and dining room, rooms for different activities (music, arts and so on), TV room, sauna and apartments for guests. Additionally, there is a courtyard with a terrace and garden with flowerbeds that the residents privately can take care off. Small initiatives occur such as study groups or joint exercise. The residence has no formal

ideological basis, however the original founders are eager to show that cohousing is a beneficial way of residing not only for residents with an [prejudicial] ideological background.

The service in the building is to a great extent based on voluntary participation, however all tenants are part of a cooking team that serves dinner every Friday. There are specific mandatory duties, such as being part of the board and attending certain meetings, however the Friday dinners are the only commitment that are obligatory for all at an interval of at presently six weeks. They are seen as a necessary part of keeping the community alive, as the tenants jointly meet. The community is aware of the fact that the residents are ageing and are actively looking for younger interested (over approximately 45 years of age) to become future tenants in order not to stagnate age-wise. The project has not had any successors in the region, being situated in a small town, but has gained interest not only in the region of Falun-Borlänge, but have tenants moving to the house from elsewhere.

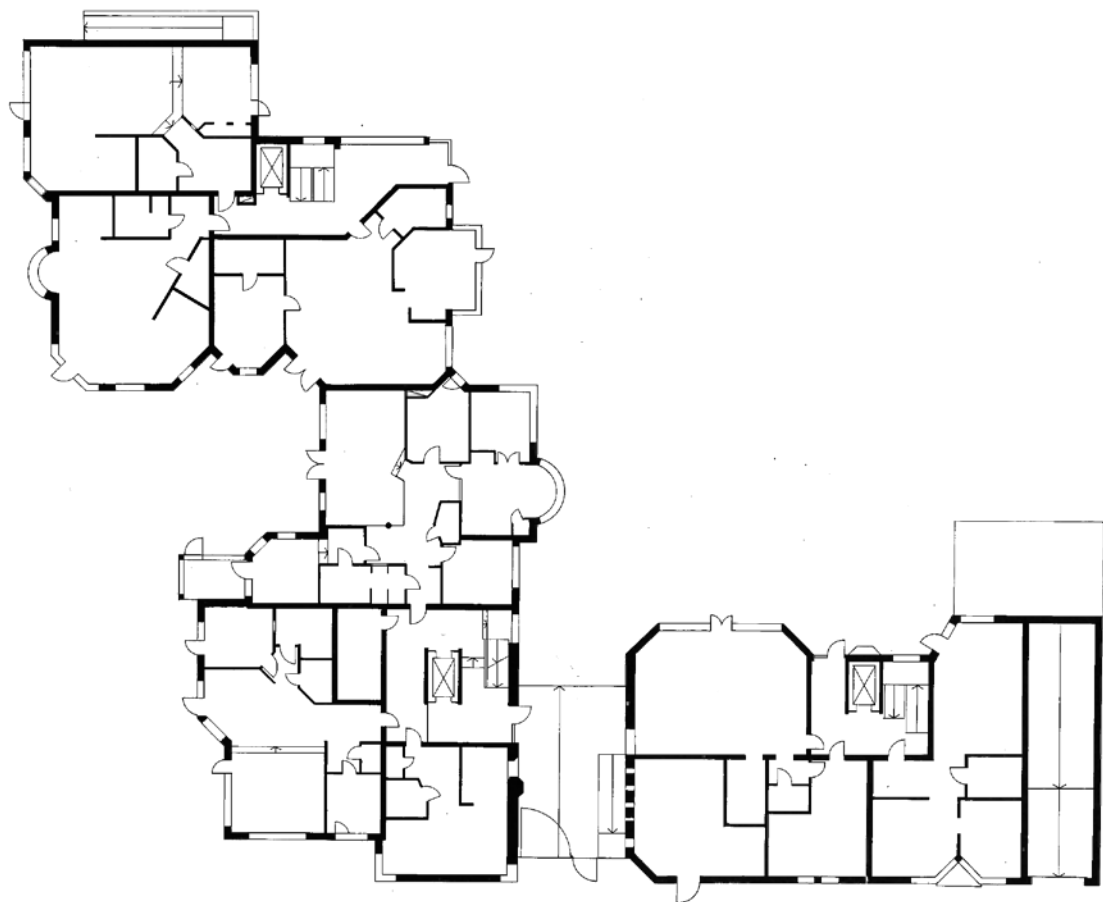
The cost of the tenure is comparable to similar apartments owned by the municipal housing company “Kopparstaden” in Falun and there is a smaller addition to the rent for the common facilities. Moreover, the dinners, other meals and activities that are done together are not included in the rent, but paid for separately.



Axelsson, J., 2014. Tersen viewed from the street.



Axelsson, J., 2014. The common dining room at Tersen, the kitchen in the back.



Bo 100, Malmö (Malmö kommun)

groundfloor

Monbijougatan 4 A, B, C

Architect: Ivo Waldhör

Completed in 1991

Number of households: 39

Form of tenure: rented flats

Interviewees: MF1, MF2, MM3, MM4, MF5, MF6

Date of interviews: 25-27 March 2014

Bo100

The Bo100 project was initiated as a part of a housing fair in Malmö 1986. However, it was not only a part of this exhibition, it was also a reaction, specifically, from the architect Ivo Waldhör and the tenants association in Malmö to a highly industrialized residential construction sector that did not suit the target groups they were building for (Sager, 1991, pp. 5-7). On an overall level, the project is founded on a high level of participation from the future tenants in the planning process; in a European context it did not have many successors. The concept was based upon a selection of future tenants that were interviewed by the architects and took part in all planning processes regarding the future dwelling.

The long and exhausting process of the project started in 1986 and it was finally inaugurated in 1991. The ideas were not new, as the architect was interested and previously involved in issues alike forming a reaction to the situation of the municipal housing company in Malmö, MKB (Waldhör, 2014). MKB, that had 1000 unoccupied apartments at the time, suffered from a high relocation rate of existing tenants. Therefore, MKB wanted to show that a different development was possible (Waldhör, 2014). The interest in obtaining an apartment was higher than presupposed and a “residence school” was set up to make everybody aware of the process and what was needed in a dwelling. Together with other architects three groups (the building has three staircases, that is one for each) were initially organized, with Waldhör as chairman. The tenants had to negotiate with each other and the architects about their aims, choices and wishes.

The building, consisting of 39 apartments between 42 and 140 square metres has five floors and is still owned by MKB. All apartments are individually designed, especially regarding interior materials and details. A tenants’ association, where all residents are members, rents the whole building from MKB and let their members lease the apartments. A

common room, sauna, laundry, hobby rooms and guest apartments are also dispensable. Technical systems are highly individually developed according to specific layouts of the dwellings.

The residents are acting as a cooperative partly on collaborative ground, maintaining the building according to specific distributed duties. There are different groups where all residents have to take part: e.g. a board, a cleaning group or keeping the garden. The association also select new tenants according to interviews and an internal queue system. Initially, the project was criticized for being both expensive and time consuming (Hultin, 1991). Probably due to this, the project has not had any Swedish equivalents amongst municipal housing companies. The concept was, and remains, an avant-garde project that has since the beginning gained interest from researchers and architects. Of particular interest is also that several of the tenants are, or have been, architects or designers, however, the association tries to select a spread of tenants according to the demographic situation in Malmö. There are both younger as well as older single households together with many families and many residents stay usually for long periods, relocations are scarcer than elsewhere amongst MKB's residential stock (Svensson, 2014).

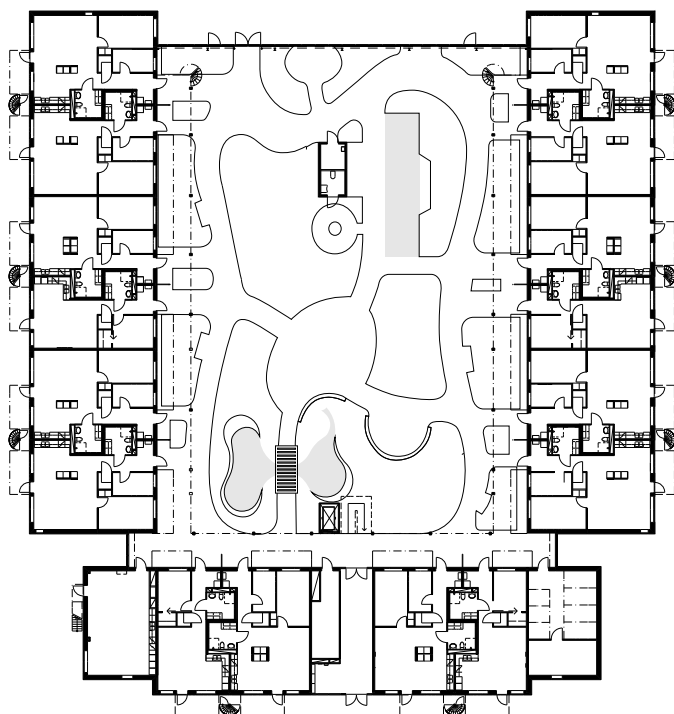
MKB did not continue working in collaboration with future tenants despite the successful outcome. Yet, a few projects afterwards were constructed where the residents had the opportunity to make smaller shifts. The rent was long based on a unitary square metre price, but has recently (2014) been changed to the common MKB-model that makes smaller apartments more expensive than bigger if comparing solitary square metres (S. Svensson, 2014). The communal life is largely dependent on the tenants will, but is functioning since the beginning with joint cleaning days and occasional social gatherings.



Axelsson, J., 2014. Bo 100 from Monbijougatan.



Axelsson, J., 2014. Entrance doors at Bo 100. The doors are individual and each apartment has an own picture.



groundfloor

Bovieran, Sävedalen (Partille kommun)

Kvarnfallsvägen 3

Architect: Liljewall arkitekter

Completed in 2009

Number of households: 48

Form of tenure: tenant owner flats

Interviewees: PM1, PM2, PF3, PM4, PF5

Date of interviews: 24 March 2014

Bovieran

Bovieran (a wordplay of “bo”, living, and “Riviera”) is a residential concept that alludes to a social and warm Mediterranean lifestyle, which largely has gained appreciation amongst Swedish seniors. Situated in a suburban area, close to a natural reserve in an area with mainly detached houses it is slightly alien in its urban setting. The ability to spend time outside with eternal summer is the main commercial advantage that the apartments are marketed with. Bovieran aims at being a concept that directs to residents over 55 with a big joint greenhouse for social activities and with an emphasis on being a safe and secure residence. The elements for the apartment buildings are precast by Skanska that the property developer has an agreement with. The concept is based on standardization and repeated in several sites around Sweden (in 2014 six projects are realized and several planned).

The idea was launched in the local newspaper in Partille and many people signed up for the first apartments, originally the residents had to have been living in Partille municipality for 40 years to qualify. The building was finished in 2009 and is now a separate cooperative housing association (bostadsrättsförening). It is situated in western Sävedalen, close to a nature reserve and Gothenburg city. The interest for the apartments has since the opening been high and the apartments are sold with notable profit for those who initially signed up (Wenzel, 2014. The information was gained during interview with S. Wenzel at a sit visit 24 March 2014).

The complex consists of three adjacent buildings that are linked with a central staircase, elevator and balconies under a large glass roof. It comprises 48 different apartments of two or three rooms and a kitchen, between 63 to 87 square metres. All apartments have access to a private [outdoor] balcony together with a small porch on the access-balcony and the common yard of approximately 1600 square metres. The yard is not accessible for visitors,

strictly for the residents. In addition, there is an apartment for guests, a common room and storage rooms together with a small separate building in the garden for storage.

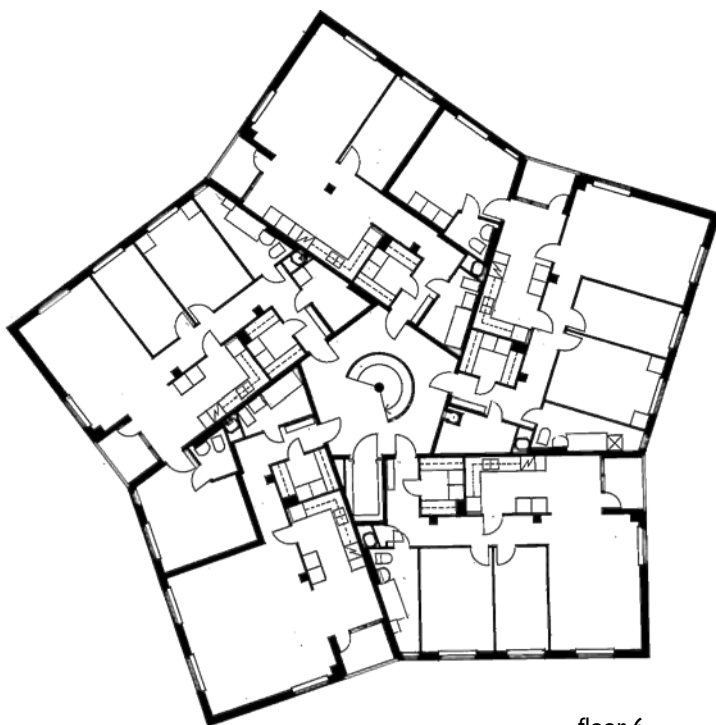
The 70 residents do not have any extra obligations to the association or the other tenants, as all activities that take place are voluntary to take part in. Moreover, many courses and activities are organised according to wishes (Wenzel, 2014). The high level of standardization has left no space for the residents to customize their individual dwellings. From the start, the residents have appreciated their residence, and senior citizens with disabilities have the possibility to walk around the courtyard if they are not able to walk outdoors. The popularity of the concept is a result partly of the fact that most residents have a wealthy background (selling previous detached homes) and long for living in a subtropical milieu. On the contrary, expressional diversity (ability to choose furniture and so on to the private balconies), children and pets are under regulations. The residents are almost all retired (65 and above), dealing with problems such as inabilities to take care of common duties and easier maintenance within the community. There is no clear or obvious plan how to attract younger residents that can deal with more effort consuming duties that have to be taken care of. Neither are there special arrangements for care units or home care service employees. The residents spend a lot of time in the courtyard and rarely outside making the building very enclosed.



Axelsson, J., 2014. Bovieran viewed from the outside.



Axelsson, J., 2014. The large climatic courtyard from an entrance balcony.



floor 6

Stacken, Bergsjön (Göteborgs kommun)

Teleskopgatan 2

Architect: Lars Ågren

Completed in 1969 / 1980

Number of households: min. 35

Form of tenure: private cooperative leasehold

Interviewees: GF1, GF2, GF3, GF4

Date of interviews: 24 March - 8 April 2014

Stacken

Stacken ("the Ant Hill") is a formally organized collective housing unit in the outskirts of Gothenburg, in the suburb Bergsjön. Being one of the oldest and most well known collective housing units in Sweden, it has been described and studied in a vast number of studies throughout the years since the initiation. Today, the collective is home to approximately 70 people, and has residents from small children to seniors. Over the years, the housing unit has encountered many problems; soon after the year 2000 the group decided to buy the building from the leasehold estate company in Gothenburg. Originally, the collective was organized and put together by Chalmers school of Architecture as a part of research in 1979-1980. The professor at Chalmers (CTH), Lars Ågren, was responsible and had designed the original drawings as the house was constructed in 1969.

The building in Teleskopgatan is one out of 9 identical and was unoccupied during the 70's, but working as office space during some years. Together with the researches at CTH, the house was refurbished for a collective housing community. There were applicants for the apartments from the beginning and a cooperative, formed amongst the tenants, rented the whole building from the housing company. 2002, the cooperative at Stacken acquired the entire complex and the tenure is now a cooperative leasehold cooperation, it was the first in Sweden (www.stacken.org, 2014). At present, the residents own and maintain the entire building which has led to drastic changes regarding their awareness of the time perspective and concerns of the built structure and its future (see interview study).

Eight stories high, the building includes 35 apartments from two rooms up to a maximum of seven rooms and a kitchen. Prior to the refurbishment all apartments were alike, that is three rooms and a kitchen. There is a central spiral staircase and elevator and five apartments on each floor.

Common rooms are located on the ground floor and the fourth floor, which includes a café, sauna, laundry, and storage. On the fourth floor there are a large kitchen, dining room, hobby rooms and a children's activity room amongst others. The structure of the building (columns and load bearing walls separating the apartments) entails certain problems for changing the actual layout, since changes in the load bearing structure are expensive and complicated (Ågren, 1984). All apartments have own kitchen and bathrooms alongside the shared cooking facilities.

The residents were part of the planning process, and regarded as a natural part (Ågren, 1984, p. 165). At present, as they own and maintain their residence through the cooperative, they have total power over the building. The ideological foundation of the community is on shared labour, which is supposed to bring people together and strengthen the communal bonds, organized in the same way since the early 80's (Caldenby et al. 1984). Today, the community experience difficulties dividing the labour and at present the joint meals have been cancelled due to incapacity of organizing them. The nursery home which was an important part of the life in the beginning is neither working (information from interviews with residents 8 April 2014: GF2, GF3, GF4). Today, the formal formation of the collective is difficult to grasp, since there are several smaller collectives within Stacken and several tenants rent rooms to secondary tenants, complicating the division of the joint labour. Noteworthy is that there are many children still living in the house, often raised in joint collaboration with other adult residents (GF2). Still, decisions are taken at large meetings that (normally) are held once a month.



Axelsson, J., 2014. Stacken is one of nine equal houses. The others have been renovated whilst Stacken remains with its original expression.

– Describe your contribution

As we have seen, it is not difficult to find advantages of living in community, and these are of course the main reasons for living in a cohousing unit. Not only social aspects matter, there are pragmatic aspects of cohousing that are as evident. Hypothetically, this duality is apparent and consistent in various forms of cohousing. Trying to understand it as a contemporary concern calls for an attempt to categorize the reasons to live in various forms of togetherness. More easily said than done, however, necessary in order to understand the underlying significance and meaning.

The analysis to understand the reasons for living in a cohousing unit and what it means to its residents is done in various steps, and with different approaches. From the previous material, cohousing will be described with a point of departure of the social connections: with the theories of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, how the individualized view upon the person affect the sociality and we will additionally see how the community operates. A few new theoretical statements are included, to deepen the understanding. One could question whether this is an adequate form of analysis, but to understand something it is often beneficial to use previous and well known methods (Westin, 2014).

Forming sociality together

As mentioned in previous sections, cohousing is about living in a community with a strong social life, as well as striving for pragmatic advantages. A main reason for living in different communal ways is to be close to other people and try to deepen the meaning and belonging of the social bonds to the fellow residents. The residents refer to not being alone and spending time together within the building. Several interviewees refer to the aspect of being able to recognize people that live close by, like in a smaller village on the countryside (e.g. FF3, GF4) and not being anonymous to the neighbours is a conspicuous feature to many of the interviewees (FM2, FM4, PF5). In this regard, the residence is clearly perceived as having [prejudicial] aspects of the *Gemeinschaft*. Tönnies describes the social links in a village as being part of a clan and having intimate relationships (Tönnies, 2001, p. 43). The natural and unplanned social life is what many of the residents are searching for. A will to experience the pre-modern village has already been discussed by Daun (2005) and Gromark (1984). Asplund also states that *Gemeinschaft* is “*a natural and unplanned social unity*” (1991, p. 67), which seemingly many of the residents are looking for, it appears difficult to find in standard development (FF1, PM1, GF1, GF3).

The spontaneous and natural social networks are important to many of the interviewees, and they regard it as unique in their housing. A kind of casual socialness is apparently an important part of the social life in the community; it establishes stronger social links.

- Sometimes when you feel lonely, you can just go out and talk. (FF3)
- It is like a block of apartments, but better. You meet people here and socialize. (FM2)
- There is a lot of contact here between the neighbours, and we actually spend some time together. (MF2)

– I can visit other people here inside, when my child is at home, he knows I'm around. (GF3)

Commonly, the residents believe that stronger social relations were not part of their previous residential experience. It was hard to establish contact with the neighbours and most respondents did not know the others according to name, nor recognizing them (MF2, MM3, PF3). Hence, a majority regard this aspect as something that is lacking in their previous residences (FF1, FF3, MF2, GF2). Aspects of maintaining the community will be brought forward in coming sections in this chapter.

In addition, being able to state that people were lacking communal issues in their previous residential experience, have made them longing for social bonds. However, the social connections are not perceived as the typical *Gemeinschaft* life, based upon intimacy nor the unplanned (Asplund, 1991, p. 67, and Tönnies, 2001, p. 22). Indeed, spontaneity is put forward by several of the interviewees, but only if it takes place in neutral areas within the building (PM4, PF5, MF2, MF6). That means a chosen sociability is interesting and relates more to the individual's ability to choose. It does not occur within the apartment but more often in the common courtyard (Bovieran, Bo100 and Stacken) or in common facilities (Tersen). In addition, it is underlined that these activities should be organized without strict control and organizations. One could possibly link it to the freedom or maybe better described unplanned, present in *Gemeinschaft*. From some of the interviews it is possible to see:

- There is a pub sometimes, and there was a lot of activities before... but it has become controlled and organized and not something compulsory. (MM4)
- It must be voluntarily, there is no fun otherwise. (PM2)

Stacken distinguishes from the others in this aspect as common life is progressing within the apartments to a greater extent (GF1, GF2, GF4).

An important question that intrigued several of the questioned residents was how they regarded their fellow neighbours. Surprisingly, the answers were very alike across the different objects and despite the differences within the residences (forms of tenure, age or obligations). Several of the respondents believe that they have friends within the residence that they have met after moving in (FF1, PM1, MF1, GF3). These tight relationships are not between all of the inhabitants, but with a few, or rather a selection of them. Additionally, they are not the reason of moving in, they are often formed inside, as a consequence of living together, happening naturally. Often something common is pushing people together: that is similar state in life (e.g. having children) or interests (e.g. playing boules). Some examples from the interviews show that the residents believe their neighbours to be friends:

- It feels as if you live here with friends, you are so warmly welcomed. (FF5)
- There are a few cliques here, and a lot of people spend time together. I do know some of the other men a bit more. (FM2)
- There are friends here, I do think so. (FF3)
- I have made some really close friends in here, I miss one of them who passed away six months ago... (BM2)
- I have made friends... but it is different how you regard your neighbours: some are friends, others are closer [more intimate] neighbours and some are just ordinary neighbours by acquaintance. (MF2)
- I value that I have friends here, I don't have to leave to socialize. (GF3)
- It's not only me and the person I live with, this a bigger community that feels special. (GF4)

We can see that within these examples there are aspects of the Gemeinschaft theory, however, it is not solely *Gemeinschaft*, but containing traces of it. To summarize and to move forward, an examination of the Gesellschaft theory is necessary, partly because describing cohousing as searching for a strong community is insufficient, but also because it is inevitable not to mention the contraries. The two terms are a dichotomy, making cohousing not being either or, rather both (Asplund, 1991, p. 40). This could seem irrelevant to discuss, but seemingly the residential community is more of a Gemeinschaft than a normal and standard residential environment. When discussing the Gemeinschaft and the intimacy, we automatically suggest that there is a state without intimacy, an opposing one. The question is if the community has more tendencies of this state or opposes it. To continue, what in cohousing points at Gesellschaft?

Living apart as individuals

- In this building it's superficial. Maybe I know some a bit better though. (FF3 talking about the social bonds)
- It is important to have your friends outside. It's like a bubble here. (GF2)

As stated in the previous section, to identify community living as *Gemeinschaft* is not enough. There are several factors that come forward in the interviews meaning that the cohousing projects and the social bonds are of a pragmatic type, an antagonistic of being spontaneous and intimate. Shortly, the objective of *Gesellschaft* is an equal trade-off where we do not act if it does not benefit us respectively: the economic and profit-focused human dominates society (Tönnies, 2001, p. 52, and Asplund, 1991, p. 76). Starting by examining the same question that was brought up in the previous chapter, across the different projects, the residents does not want to regard their neighbours as friends or family, many state that they only have bowing acquaintance with a majority of them (for example: MF5, PF3, PF5, FF3). This is seen through almost all the interviews, both with women and men and age.

- I don't think this will work if you get too close with people... you have to stay distanced. It is better to keep that outside, there can be a lot of gossiping when you are so close. (FM2)
- I do not join in at the common dinners, I visit my daughter then, the family's outside here. (FF3)
- Well, I regard them as neighbours... it's interesting, but friends are so much more intimate. (PF5)
- It's more about living according to paragraphs, and you do not do that with your friends. (MM4)
- The others are neighbours, maybe a bit more social than normal though. (MF5)
- It doesn't work very well to live with your friends... I

want to have my stuff. I don't want to share everything.
I think you are a private, but still social. (GF1)

As seen, intimate social bonds are kept outside the residence. Many respondents even emphasize the importance of having family and close friends exclusively outside the residential unit, not blending them (FF3, FM2, PF5, MF1, GF2). It is possible to conclude that the interviewees have not moved to the different cohousing objects in order to create stabile social contacts, or in order to make close friends. It seems rather to be as one woman expresses it:

– I'm from a small village, where everybody greets and
says hello. I wanted that again, to recognize people.
(FF3)

In addition, one could clearly notice that independence is important, especially in these projects that aim to have older residents (Tersen and Bovieran). They commonly state that they are not homes for assisted living, and that residents must cope with some responsibilities (PF5, PM1, FF3). They all stress that it is important that you can take care of your personal duties, as well as fellow neighbours are not supposed to look after sick or disabled people.

Another aspect that is mentioned in the interviews is the benefit of sharing facilities or having joint activities (and therefore diminishing specific household work). The *homo oeconomicus* is apparent, where one, the human being, is looking for profit acting on an [conceptually] economic market (Asplund, 1991, p. 73, 88). In these cases, it can be small things such as tools (FM4, BM3), as well as taking care of each other (FF5). Especially taking care of children together is mentioned, where these are allowed (Bo100 and Stacken) (MF6, GF1, GF2, GF3). In all interviews personal

benefits are mentioned as a reason for why the residence is perceived as something positive and a reason that keeps the project working.

- I immediately saw advantages with this, to buy things that you can't afford on your own. Take tools as an example, we can buy it together. (FM4)
- We can share the common garden, the games room, and the apartment for visitors. (PF3)
- We have common duties, to keep the rents low... I appreciate that. (MF2)
- It's practical, in the collectives here there are also living people that have children together but aren't together, only to take care of them jointly. (GF1)
- I can have another life and still be a mother, because we take care of the children together. (GF2)

For one of the projects, Bo100 in Malmö, it is even more evident that personal benefits, and strictly economic ones is a main reason for why residing specifically there. The rent is kept lower (under the MKB standard) due to the shared work of maintaining the building and courtyard. Several of the interviewees here state that this is one of the main reasons for staying (MF1, MF2, MM4, MM5, MM6), a notable *Gesellschaft* feature of individual importance.

For one of the projects, Stacken, ideologically based upon shared labour, it is possible to notice that the work is not perceived as something that benefits the individuals economically, but rather socially. Experiencing a current decrease in personal involvement, the labour is still regarded as an aspect that creates connection and community; however, the other residents are generally perceived as colleagues, rather than friends working with own specific duties.

- People are almost as colleagues, we have to keep the machinery going... we have different roles and try to

be clear with that. (GF2)

– We share the building, and we own it and it has its consequence. We must take care of this house. (GF1)

The work and duties are aspects of Gemeinschaft, succeeding reflexively, creating a social connectivity that are based on the execution in itself; on the other hand the outcome is individual and beneficial for the single person. The social life can therefore be seen as an organic community but also resulting in individual company.

As a concluding remark, it is possible to state and prove that main reasons for most residents are the personal benefits of sharing and living in a community. The *homo oeconomicus* is living within the communities, and not the one looking for familial bonds. As seen, there is a thin line between privacy, intimacy and public life, but several tenants are eager to emphasize that there is one. However, what has not been mentioned previously and that several of the interviewees withhold as crucial are aspects of safety, also seen as a main reason for living within a community. Safety appears both within a Gemeinschaft, as everybody involved is kept under the same social control, as in a Gesellschaft, where there are augmented surveillance and control. It has to be at an augmented level, as the life situation of implodes to insecurity and distress.

– It is nice for me to know that there are other people around: it's safety. (FF1)

– I want to be on my own, but you want to feel safe and secure. (FM2)

– We feel secure, and the children think so too, it is important for them. (PF3)

The social control is important to maintain, in order to create this safety; seen as a Gesellschaft phenomenon it is strictly advantageous for the individual. Asplund has devoted a passage to this phenomenon, through an

analysis of Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* claiming that feelings of safety and its exemplification (although in an urban context) is part of Gesellschaft; it is not intimate or moralistic rather a reflex, or auto function that is necessary (Asplund, 1991, p. 57).

To sum up, we can note that the residential communities have aspects of both, however, it is not about finding intimacy or domestic, familial bonds. In that regard, cohousing is not looking back romanticizing times and societies that have passed by, but a response to a state of today. In this aspect, explanations so far have not been sufficient and we have to connect the advancement to individualization processes. The community could possibly connect to the fulfilment and manifestation of the individual, because it is a personal choice to live in a cohousing unit, and as the Gesellschaft theory is pointing at, there are personal and individual gains of contribution. That is, is cohousing a result or product of individualization, something of a paradox of modernity?



Axelsson, J., 2014. Staircase at Stacken. All floors have different paintings and colours.



Axelsson, J., 2014. Entrance hall at Tersen. Both at Tersen and Stacken the communication areas are regarded as important social meeting places.

Aim for being individual

To explain the significance of the residential community Tönnies' theories are not sufficient. What distinguishes cohousing is that it concerns the social life and how the collective and individual are connected to this (not solely, but that is the dominant use of the terms in the previous section). As we have noticed, a shift in Western society has come with individualization and the emancipation of the individual.

We will start by repeating some of the arguments. Asplund, Beck and Trägårdh (to mention a few) describe individualization as a major precondition. Bauman says in a few words that society actually exists in the activity of individualizing, as well as the individuals "reshape their mutual engagements" that form it (Beck et al. 2002, p. xiv). A reaction and consequence of this is the determination to live in a residential community (expressed by a few) and direct to participatory models, where individuals take part in their decisions and formation of their homes. It is definitely a chosen reflexivity, and chosen engagements, but considered necessary and inevitable by some.

In this passage the interviews prove that participation in a residential community is a searching for a stabile institution strengthening the individual and her strive to procure a life for herself, a reminder is Beck's do-it-yourself biography: in a Swedish context it is possible to state that it is obvious as society aims at making us independent persons (Beck et al. 2002, p. 3 and Berggren et al. 2006, p. 32).

A reason brought to front in many of the interviews is the aim to manage and take care of your own residential situation and shape it as preferred, which they do not believe to be possible elsewhere (MM4, GF2, GF4). Perhaps the view and reason why some are attracted to community housing is changing from a lack of social-qualitative values in the residence

(described by Gromark, 1984, p. 190) to an ability of manifesting the individual and take action regarding an own residential situation. The individual is therefore strengthened to a high extent possessing power over the residential situation, to a higher extent than otherwise.

- I wanted to have more fun and I believe in this... (FF1)
- We form the community, according to how each of us want it... integrity is important. (PF5)
- My dream was to design my own apartment. (MF1)
- There is more tolerance here, I have not experienced that before. (MF2)
- To have the power over the residence is important [...] and it's complicated, but this is such a freedom compared to renting an apartment. (GF3)

The example where this apparently is more important than in other, is in the collective house Stacken, where the residents jointly mention aspects of aiming to feel personal control over their residential situation, which they do not believe, is possible in previous residential situations (GF2, GF3, GF4). It is possible to see it as a consequence of an unfulfilling residential market in general, with few possibilities to adapt to individual wishes and needs, but also as an emphasis of the own person. In the case of Bo100, with user adapted residences, several of the residents described is as a personal success to be able to give physical space to their specific needs (MF1, MM4, MF5) or to reside in somebody else's design (MM3, MF6), about the latter one of the residents expresses:

- I can live my life here, there is affection and devotion put into it making it unique. (MM3)

The last quotation points at an interesting feature. Not being able to adapt the residence to your specific needs would thus imply the fact that

residents adapt the life situation to the residence instead, the perfect suiting apartment (see: Nylander and Braide-Eriksson, 2011) is not as important as the possibility to obtain a personalized. This is specifically noticed amongst respondents in Bo100, where uniqueness of the apartments is considered important despite having a residence not matching the current needs. There is a will, and chosen possibility to adapt, if the residence suit current demands on an average acceptable level and has a distinctive character compared to other residences in the area. The Bo100 project consists of rental apartments implying that residents to a greater extent settle with the apartments that they have (MF1, MF2, MM3, MF6).

– In reality we live crowdedly [lacking at least two rooms]... but our apartment has two balconies, and windows in every direction, with a huge room. That's really amazing. But the ceiling is so low, I can reach it. (MF6)

– I like most apartments [has been living in several different], they have all been really nice. Surely, they have been too big or too small, but they have suited me. I appreciate their personality. (MM3)

The other projects have either more extended common and shared facilities (thus expanding the apartments) or one is a housing cooperative ("bought and sold" on the open market), implying that a personalized apartment is of less importance.

Previously we have investigated the relationship to the apartment; continuing, there is a focus on personal gains. The individual's possibility to support comes forward in several of the interviews, as a way to find relief of everyday tasks and duties, thus leaving time for other activities (FF1, FM4, PM4, MM3, GF2). The personal benefit of choosing to reside in a cohousing example must therefore be regarded as an important part (see previous section about the Gesellschaft theory), as residents aim to saving

time and money.

Gromark argues that society today consist of *a fully emancipated social being* that is in the middle of an existential crisis. The aim, and way for her in order to reposition and anchor into contemporary times is to create and own the reflexive residential situation. That is, the community anchors into the past, present and future (Gromark, 1984, p. 190). Habraken describes the situation similarly, stating that belonging is a way to relate to other citizens (or residents). Since the residence is being a place of utter importance for us, a fixed base; it is the place where attachment and creation of a meaning for us are most evident and important (Habraken, 1998, p. 227).

- I know almost everybody by name here, even their children... it gives meaning. (PM2)
- I feel proud here, there is a collective pride regarding the building, and we want to be a part of it. (MM3)
- I do brag a lot about this house, I think all do. I feel for it. (MF6)
- I wanted to be connected to a place, to this organism. (GF4)

As seen, the individual possibility to decide and control the own situation is obvious and a way of doing it is to relate to stabile institutions in society. The family and domesticity is the most apparent one, present still today (Beck et al., 2001, p. 130), but our notion of familial bonds are rephrasing. How come some direct to community and cohousing units to look for these social bonds? They are not domestic in category, which is an inadequate description.

At present, we have no choice but to control our biographies, we suffer and benefit from a reflexive view. As stated in the previous chapter, residents in cohousing or community dwellings are not looking for intimacy or domestic relations with their fellow neighbours (if that is the term one

would use). Emancipation from previous societal constructs and relations to other people has been erased, which forces us to create a new existence (Gromark, 1984, p. 190). To anchor each individual situation and the way we live is important. Bauman questions whether the pendulum is swinging back as human emancipation from communal dependency makes us eager to recreate the reliance and form us to who we are (Beck et al. 2001, p. xv). The emancipation from a dependency (that we control) makes us yearn and participate in social constructs that we can possess the power of, to create a context (Berggren et al. 2006, p. 74). To formulate an understanding, we have to look at the social connections again.

Granovetter explains why it is important with acquaintances to anchor us as individuals and not only in a physical environment. He argues that people relying solely on intimate relations have less understanding for what actions and dependencies actually control their situation that succeed outside a strong clique. Strong ties (to use his terminology) shield off from reality, while communication in the *Gesellschaft* with many ties is opener and more widespread (Granovetter, 1983, pp. 203-204). Stating that many loose connections anchors the individual more, and creates the safety we search for. In addition, an emancipated individual seek meaning and information, as well as sociality, within this expanded network of weak ties. Recalling that a majority of the interviewees relate to their co-livers with words such as *superficial*, *acquaintance* or *neighbours*, it points at the fact that it is the weak ties that are important and matter. Thus not searching for intimacy, but rather expanded social networks based on acquaintance.

Granovetter (ibid., p. 210) likewise states that the weak ties provide opportunities, but also health and security. Beck refers to this aspect as a competition with succeeding individualization amongst equals that strive for social connections that are beneficial. Beck additionally claims that social relations in residential areas often are more loosely organized

than the community within the family (Beck et al. 2001, p. 33-35). This looseness, or weakness in the social networks creates a basis of security and belonging which intimate do not. Interviewees from the whole spectrum have, as already mentioned, their family and intimate friends outside the specific residential unit (e.g. FM2, FF3, PF5, MF1, MM3, GF1).

Moreover, a reason for many of the interviewees to move to a cohousing unit is to avoid social stigmatization, or the risk of being left alone. In this regard they do not look for a general sense of community, but for a *place based* such (Westin, 2014). There is an overall tendency of not being content with a former residential situation (FM2, FF3, PF5, GF2) or need of help and relief, as noted (PF3, GF2). However, there are many that want to escape personal loneliness.

- We lived a bit isolated before... so I wanted to create a broader social life before I turn older. (FF5)
- There is a very nice atmosphere, I won't be alone. (PF3)
- This is so good for us lonely seniors, we check on each other. (MF1)
- You hear about old people lying alone... and my daughter can't be here running around all the time, so I think it's good we know each other. (MF1)

As noted, the interviewees want to procure themselves with a residence, but also choose the community and have power over the situation. The respective group own three of the studied objects, and the fourth, Bo100, is entirely rented from the municipal residential company. They, select the tenants after interviews, similar to the other projects (except Bovieran: a housing cooperative) (MF1, GF4, FF1, FF3). The residents regard this as an essential aspect and an example of the decentralized social society previously discussed, where the ability to choose appears more important than the choice in itself. The importance is not to be under a hierarchy with

somebody else dictating the social life, hence the significance of choosing your neighbours (Berggren et al. 2009, p. 366).

One could expect that the residents as a consequence of this would regard each other as alike, or seeking to connect with people with the same ideals or situations. However, Granovetter's ties (or Bauman's reshaping) do not have to deal with similarity or conformity, since this transform them into strong, intimate links, which is rendered less important (Granovetter, 1983, p. 204).

- I don't think we are alike, we all have different backgrounds. It's an advantage to be different. It wouldn't work if we were too close, you need the distance... (FF1)
- It's different how much people engage themselves, but I do not care, it is voluntary. (FF5)
- It must be based on voluntarily participation, it's no fun otherwise. (PM2)

To conclude, the ability to create weak ties, and acquaintances is important and a major reasoning for why seeking residential community. That it is bound to a setting is also of crucial, having engagements is about social reliance and control over our own autobiographies, but the question is, as a concept presented by Bauman, if living togetherness and [enclosed] conformity really is the remedy? (Beck et al. 2001, p. xvii) This brings us to more critical points of alienation from the everyday (urban) life situation.



Axelsson, J., 2014. Seating arrangement in the forest at Bovieran.



Being alien to others

In previous sections, we have examined the social bonds within the community and seen that they are perceived as less intimate than expected, on the other hand strengthening the individual and its well-being. In addition to this last point, what is possible to see in many of the interviews is the fact that esteem and separation (segregation) of the community and the individual are important. Shortly, the interviewees state that they are living in special as well as unique residences, apart from common or standard residential situations. They are both different in attributes, but also the knowledge about the building that distinguishes it.

- My friends said: but, you can't live there, it's an old nursing home! But we in here, we know we aren't that. (FF1)
- This garden, the yard, it is really something different, it separates us [from others]. (PM2)

The emphasis on the secluded and segregated community within the building shows tendencies of alienating it from the urban situation in which it is located. Several describe the social groups as enclosed foreseeing themselves with social situations and remarks from outside is seen as a threat (GF2, GF4), an example is one the Bo100 project changed the calculation of the rent to a standard model (MF1, MM4, MF6). According to Sennett, the communal identity is a precondition for collective actions, normally sprung out of a threat. The threat can therefore be regarded as a requirement to keep the group together and form a collective identity (Sennett, 2002, p. 222). The risk with this identity is though that it is made up of empty fantasies as the group tries to be conform, solely in the act of being separate without sharing the required action. In order to keep the collective image, alienation and separation becomes the remedy, however

often based on weak action and a self-made image with inexistent threats.

Additionally, the building's expression often distinguishes from other buildings in the area (Bo100, Stacken and Bovieran) or previous use of the building separates it (Tersen).

- The nuclear power flag hanging on the façade, people think we are hippies, but we know we aren't. (FF3)
- We are always asked about the negative sides of living here... but there aren't any. This is special, not like the other [Bovieran] ones. (PM1)
- The expression separates it, it looks fun and vivid, with all the colours and so... Cool apartments and low rents, it attracts. (MF1)

The fact that the residence and community within is special also distinguishes it from other residences, particularly in the case of Bo100 and Stacken. The knowledge about the community and formal (historical) formation separate the projects from the ordinary or standard.

- That it is a special house makes the community important, and we do everything together... that's why we do it. (MF2)
- There is a collective spirit regarding the building, always when I speak about where I live, I say that I have a beautiful apartment in Bo100. There is a special feeling, definitely. (MM2)
- The internal story in the house is important, new tenants adopt to its spirit. (MM4)
- We brag a lot about the building, I think it is the flagship project of MKB. (MF6)
- We know a lot about the house, we know it. If you have lived here during some time, then you can relate to the history. (GF4)

As seen, the respondents perceive their residence as something special

and apart from the ordinary. The aim to distinguish and separate is obvious amongst a majority of the residents, additionally they regard themselves as pioneers (GF2, MM4) and positively excluded where they can care for their own matters, separated from other societal problems (PM1, GF1). There is a clear will and aim to regard the residence as different in comparison to standard dwellings. Thörn states that striving for seclusion, isolation and segregation is problematic for urban development and integration (Thörn, 2009b). The public life is to a great extent lived *within* the building, and the respective community emphasize that the community living is about this. The social life risks becoming privatized and controlled decreasing community (Olsson, 2007, p. 65). This event is obvious inside the buildings as well, decreasing spontaneity and participation in an urban setting (MM3, GF2). The buildings are often [physically] hard to get into, one woman describes the Bo100 as a fortress with gates and locks (MF6) as well as a strict social control of who enters and passes the courtyard (MF1, MM3, MF6), the “auto-surveillance” is perceived as problematic (MM6).

The residents in Bovieran are also emphasising the physical security, with locked doors and strict social control within the building, no one is said to be let in that is not a resident or formal guest (PM1, PM3, PF5). Some residents close to the entrance gate have [social] control over who enters or not (PF5). There is a conform control of how the residents are allowed to personalize their respective entrance space.

– If problems appear then we solve them. If someone has too much stuff by their entrance door, we come up with rules of conduct. (PF5)

This is not omnipresent, but this example shows a tendency that is present amongst all different objects. The control inside creates own rules and framework that possibly weakens social life, as stated by Olsson above

(Olsson et al., 1997). To summarize one could state that the community, its conduct and connections to the outside are often weaker than the internal connections and bonds. The communities are selective: they choose what is tolerable and what is not. The unplanned and unpredictable are aspects that are unenclosed within, as social control is described as strong (PF5, MM3, GF2).

In correlation to the noted tendencies of segregation, special committees select future residents to the different projects (except for Bovieran, where the apartments are sold). These committees have the main power to choose who will be accepted as a tenant in the various residences. As stated previously, the respondents in the interviews do not perceive themselves as being alike or sharing values, however, to a certain extent they believe it is necessary to be interested and devoted to community life and work to match the qualifications. Two talk about previous knowledge about communities as important (GF2, GF4). The interest in communal life appears to be (generally) ubiquitous in all the different projects (FF1, FF5, PM2, PF5, MF2, MF6, GF1, GF2). Remembering the participation in the community as strengthening the individual, the devotion amongst the residents to the common life, and the expectancy to participate, makes the social groups conform. In the projects, the socio-economic background is often similar (even though this is not dealt with here). The residents do not see this as a problem, but the attraction lies within the same social groups.

- No one here has been a worker, we are different persons though. (FM4)
- I think there are more educated people with a Swedish background here than in this area on an overall level. (GF2)
- It is about getting as much paid or your apartment as possible, not everyone can afford this. (PM2)

They are more likely to develop the social bonds if they are alike, and often they stay as weak ties, which perhaps is less obvious (Granovetter, 1984, p. 204). As we have seen in literature (e.g. in Sanoff, 2001) co-creation and community within a group creates understanding and trust, but simultaneously it segregates and perhaps even alienates the group as they believe themselves to be living apart from the standardized. To conclude, one can spot aspects of seclusion and segregation from society, and a will to regard yourself and your residence as something special and appreciated, which can be unproblematic.

The segregation and the weak ties within the community create certain problems that many of the residents refer to in the interviews. That is, the difficulty and inability to cooperate, to plan the development of the community and to make the social life work. It is due both to the individual segregation within, as well as the overall in an urban setting.

Community and cooperation

Richard Sennett separates community and cooperation as he states that communities are easily formed, but that cooperation is hard and demanding to maintain (Sennett, 2012). We remember the statement that collective actions derive from a communal idea. Boeri also discuss how communities easily arise, but likewise as easily vanish (Boeri, 2009, p. 253-254). A theme many of the interviewees refer to describing how cooperation works in the community. Amongst a majority of the interviewees it is possible to see tendencies of less cooperation with a consequence in weakening of social structures. This part will discuss these issues and put forward arguments of how residents regard their participation in the communal matters.

- Without our common dinners it wouldn't work, the fact that we are forced to work together strengthens us. [...] There are people that don't want to take part, but they have to in the dinner-preparations, so that they don't end up totally outside. (FM4)
- The common workdays are important, you meet people then and things happen there. (GF4)
- There are the days when we fix the yard, it is important. And the duties we have, you always meet people then and work together. (MF2)

Commonly, the different projects have organised “working days”, that a majority of the interviewees mention as important in order to withhold social cooperation. Those are described as important for creating a common idea about the residence (FM4, PM1, MF2, MF6, GF2, GF4), together with common duties performed every week that create positive connotations to the cooperation. However, the social control also weakens the will and aim to participate since the expectancy of a free choice to cooperate is held as important. Sennett writes that a true challenge of the

cooperation is to make it worth the time and effort that the individuals put into it (2012, p. 234). The difficulty lies within the fact that there is often an aim for cooperation, but there are unclear or dubious reasons for what it will result in (FF1, MF2, GF1, GF2). Sennett continues with arguing that cooperation often fails if social bonds are becoming weak, but the community might still operate as a social group. In short, he means that vagueness tend to lead to withdrawal (2012, p. 4), which eventually can lead to conflict and weakness of the community. A comparison between Granovetter's weak and strong ties is interesting: with many weak ties cooperation is not as simply organised. Problems to make the "machinery" work are obvious.

In both Stacken and Bo100 it is possible to see tendencies of withdrawal from public and common cooperation, in both cases the communities have become shattered and stagnated. A weakening of the ties leads to a "smallest effort possible" situation and eventually the communities stop working as social units. It depends both on insecurity in formal rules, too hard control and that the power has been withdrawn from the residents on an overall scale lacking forums for discussion.

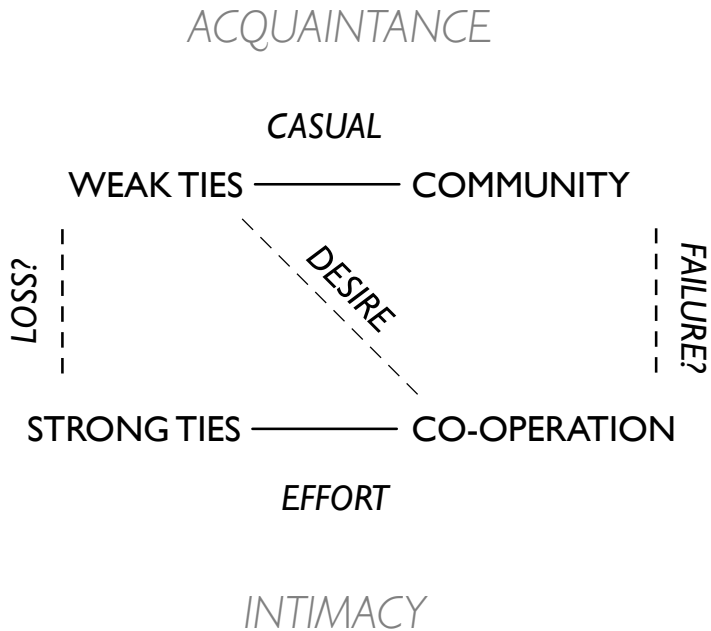
- I have lost faith in the organisation, they don't listen... it's too formal, so many paragraphs and there are no joint discussions. (MM3)
- It's so organised and not spontaneous any longer, the joy is gone. (MF4)
- I got angry when they removed the playground, I didn't have a say. (MF6)
- We didn't even manage to cook food together, it's absurd, and there are so many opinions... (GF2)
- People don't take care of the common rooms, and I don't want to clean after them... it's annoying" (GF4)
- So many people pass, so many relations... it's confusing, it's too informal who lives here. I don't know where my loyalties are. (GF4)

In addition, the residents jointly refer to themselves and their own effort in the participation: we previously saw how participation in a community underlines and strengthens a reciprocal view upon their own personas. The result is a tendency and feeling of not being sufficient. Not all expresses it, however, there are tendencies of not doing enough, at most times unspoken, resulting in retraction.

- There is an unexpressed social demand to participate, and at times expressed, unfortunately [...] you feel stressed if you don't do enough. (FM4)
- I mean, we probably do too much... even when we were ill. (PM4)
- I feel bad when I can't join in, but I work irregular hours. I get bad conscious when I can't participate even though it is impossible. Some people comment on it as well. (MF2)

The overall self-organization within a formal group can become problematic, there are several experiencing difficulties in coordinating the own life with others, it even risks leading to desperation and stigmatization of the sole individuals (Beck et al., 2001, pp. 42, 48-49). The insufficiency of and incapacity to coordinate different expectations and cooperation is a result of this. The view upon the “private” unit as a refuge and place for retraction is certainly a consequence, it is a way to overcome and choose sociability and privacy according to what the tenant wants.

- My apartment is my own, I don't see people there. (FF1)
- My apartment is private, with my things, my furniture and so on. If I want to meet someone I do it down here, because this is not mine, it is no one's. But not for several hours, then I meet another friend in town” (FF3)
- If the door I closed, then it's closed. We do not run

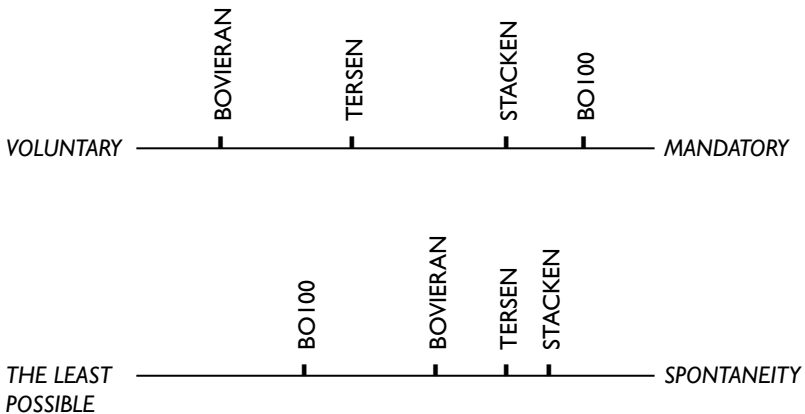


Above: Figure explaining the difference between social acquaintance and intimacy. The strong ties enhance cooperation, whilst the weaker often form the residential community. The momentum is to achieve the desired cooperation with the weak ties. Is it a failure in itself? To urge for weak ties to become strong equals both a quantitative loss and is neither desired by the participants.

Right: Figure explaining the [experienced] social life at the different case study examples. Top: is it mandatory to participate in shared duties? Bottom: to what extent do the residents join common activities?

around here. The own is important. (PM2)
 – Integrity is important. We do not come and go my home is private. We meet in the yard. (PF5)
 – No, we don't spend time here with others and then we meet outside... In our apartment, that's where only we can be. (MF6)

The quotes are linked to the questions about the way of regarding what social life is supposed and desired to take place within the apartment. The private and intimate sphere is not a place for the other residents in the community since it is reserved for family or intimate friends. It is a refuge from communal tasks, where the community and cooperation do not reach. Additionally, recalling that intimate relations are subsisted outside the residence and community, the shared spaces are important for the common life within. The private space diminishes the possibility for cooperation, and is a manifestation of the forced individualization of the persons within the community, one can compare with Beck's argument that equals risk isolation and retraction within social groups as they have to manifest themselves (Beck et al. 2001, p. 33), and at times making it difficult for the cooperation to be organised.



Concluding remarks

- I wanted some community, and I wanted power over my situation [...] The possession and support is important. (GF2)
- This is a dream, to make my own residence... it's ours and it's important. It's unique. (MM3)

To conclude this section, a wide spectrum of meanings has been presented, conclusively coming down to one aspect, which summarizes the reflections: the social life and the bonds that emerge within the groups are weaker than supposed: we see a weak community being formed. The interviewees are not looking for intimate relations or new friends, as shown with the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* dichotomy. The residents more frequently underline aspects of casual social connections and basic recognition, which Granovetter's ties explained the reason for. The social ties are thus often weak, but extensive, sometimes even abundant and not easily manageable. The distinguished cohousing living is therefore not about finding friends and equals, rather a way of formulating a context, a personal one, together with the individual benefits that several referred to. Still it is a marginal way of living in number of units, but the residential communities point at structural aspects that are important to bear in mind.

Another important feature in the thesis are aspects of individualization, and as seen, the communal life underlines the individual as a participator that choose to join. As several interviewees explain, the community strengthens them individually, and distinguishes them. They do not describe themselves as community members; rather the will to live *by* a community is important. It is about formulating an own residential situation, often because they are forced to since standardized development is not adequate. Aiming for a context and something that connects in time and space are important issues, we can note Gromark that argues that individuals, with

possibilities to make own choices, will consciously and actively search for community and the possibility to live closer to other individuals (Gromark, 1984, p. 174). However, as the communal living is not creating the intimacy that this would require, nor the desired cooperation as a self-constructed value, the community is aiming to manifest and position the individual. It strengthens the individual and emancipates her with a strong individuality within the community.

It is evident that the residential community and the social life within, is more complex than presumed, due to the dialectic appearance of communal life. Residing is linked to domesticity and intimacy, whereas a residential community is about casual sociability, individuals and personal benefits. The duplicity is an aspect that will be further addressed and discussed in the concluding sections.

As a final reflection, there are some remarks on the method of conducting the interviews. At times the interviewees found it difficult to describe their life within the community, however, the respondents were eager to participate and contribute with their personal view. As stated, their answers were often alike and not specific in the various residences, generally not to an influential extent. It underlines that the communal life often face similar challenges and possibilities in different cohousing objects, which would mean that the result is useful to relate to cohousing. The communities often act similarly in that sense, at least formally. Distinguishing aspects depend on e.g. tenure or the amount of voluntary participation; however, this is not connected to the formal rules, rather informalities.





#5

conclusion

The consequential society

Time has come to finish the work with a concluding discussion. As the text has the character of essay, many objectives and arguments have previously been presented. The process has been characterized by moving in different sectors and scales, from discussing the intimate bonds on a personal level, to incorporating collective and general perceptions of community. At times it has been difficult but points at the fact that what is visible in a small scale, has consequences and equivalents in a larger sense, it is as simple as saying that what I do, matters, a cliché statement that often is true.

The increased interest for living and take part in communities is a positive development, beneficial in many ways. It has a reciprocal significance, being important on its own, and can shortly be characterized as a product of present society. Statistics are pointing in this direction, making it possible to say that these social projects empower democracy, resilience and an anchoring in a physical and mental environment. For many of the interviewees, the aim is to create a deeper meaning to the individual living situation, superficial as it sounds. The sole fact that cohousing, or community, saves resources adds to a positive picture, however, this work has proven the necessity of discussing what development is desired and how it is manifested. The question and reason *why* some direct to residential community life is probably as important, not solely *what* we are choosing.

Looking back at the initial purpose: what it means to live and participate in a residential community, a main reason is that adequate housing is not found elsewhere. There is also a longing for living with other people and social stability is important. An obvious aspect is that the development and growth of residential community life is not a tendency of its own, it is a case in continuity. The communities and collective ideas that both Gromark (1984) and Caldenby (et al. 1984) discuss, were not solitaires, but effects

and results of societal shifts that are present and even more influential today, as we see individualization intensely connected to a modernity with increasing amounts of choices. Hence, it is not about looking back, since cohousing is not a contemporary aspect of Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft*, or Asplund's long gone rural times. Neither is it a strict *Gesellschaft* or a product of the Bourgeois lifestyle. It might be an additional option, still it is a valid point of reference to understand actions and if this is an acceptable sociality. Hypothetically, I was looking for a strong and immense community, but the result is almost a weak community in analogy with the weak ties as presented by Granovetter. What is debatable is whether the weak community is as beneficial as the extensive weak social connections or more problematic.

As individualization forces us to choose what life should be about, some people choose to live in fellowship with others, apparently an individually beneficial choice. Thus, it is a way to enforce own capabilities. At the same time it points at the shortage of a social stability on other fronts, it is not a coincidence that almost all the interviewees describe it as an insufficient aspect in their previous residential experiences. It is a basic need to acquire social support somewhere and regularly we do this in a residential domestic situation. That directing to a residential community additionally is an expression for stating that one has power over the own [residential] situation is no exaggeration. It is arguable to regard cohousing as a result of a forced choice and will to take care of a residential situation: an act of desperation in times when *Gesellschaft* is on the border of becoming far too strong to be tolerable. That is, have we only seen the beginning?

The communities and the generally private development can be more problematic than presupposed. Thörn (2009a, b) shows that private development could turn into a gated community in existence outside society. They shield off and incorporate only a selection of a preferred

urbanity or sociality, resulting in a secluded and disintegrated life in despair. Few disagree upon the statement that this is a problematic development, however, what most assume is that cohousing on average have tendencies of this excluding development, even though it is not perceived as such. As stated, to be in power of the residence decentralize the control of it (as with the residential communities), at the same time it entails having responsibility. Underlying this aspect one can spot larger democratic issues and even crisis. Who is supposed to care for others as we distance us longer away from common ground?

– [...] the affirmation of individual autonomy within the individualistic welfare State will sooner or later automatically lead to a deprivation of the social contract. (Berggren et al. 2009, p. 376, translation by author)

As a tendency of a present society, the social contract that a modern welfare state yearn and sometimes lack is established within the residential examples presented to front in this text. They re-formulate the lacking social connections that a contemporary society in many ways has washed away, populated merely by individuals and not cross-connecting communities. This absence is subsequent for missing democratic development with fewer inabilities to cooperate and stagnated urbanities. That islands of community develop make the residents content, government and institutions pleased, as several of them anchors in a local context and creates the awareness of the residential situation that is necessary. Simultaneously, one cannot avoid questioning who will ensure equal opportunities and create a sustainable ground for the important commitment in our dwelled milieus.

Empowered individuals

The division of individuals and society, or residents and communities, is appearing arbitrary, especially since they make up unities consistent of each other. Discussing cohousing it is inevitable to end up with these prevailing paradigms. The social ties, that merely are a reason to live in a cohousing unit, have this dialectic appearance. Concluding, it is not about indulging in a whole, but rather to navigate between social entities. This movement between scales is apparent in the relationship between the individuality and community, which the participators have to deal with. From the start I believed the opposite, as the community would represent a lack of intimacy, a will to create friendship and support and a method of relief from a ubiquitous individual focus. Although, attempting to relate residential community life to formal development, it is the individual's participation in a social group that is rendered important and not the forthcoming of the social community. One of the most evident conclusions during this work is that there are many polarizations and they appear more important than I initially regarded them to be. There are the individual and society; Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft; shared and private, all those opposing terms are apparent within the residential community. That many of the interviewees relate to these antagonists and are aware of them explains that many deal with these relations actively and consciously. The aim is both to live in a social situation with personal benefits and strengthen the own person. It is beyond doubt a chosen do-it-yourself life.

To have power over the housing situation is, as discussed, a dominant motive to move into a residential community: the connection between the resident and the physical environment is strong, but also to the social context. It is as much about individually choosing physical environment as social connections, the regard upon the two is perhaps more comparable

than expected. This knowledge suggests that the mental connection to physical and social aspects both matter in dwellings and are a key to the desired resilience. However, the problem is to urge people to “make the right choices”. The question is whether space for the community is buildable and the need to investigate it is important. Olsson argue that there is a need for a socially neutral arena where the community can occur, a vague space that all included are in possession of, however not privatized (Olsson et al. 1997). In the case study Stacken, several interviewees refer to the staircase as an important place; in the others the garden or yard is important as a social hub. It is also able to note tendencies of a privatization of the joint arenas, conveyed by individuals that occupy them in different ways. As we see, the residential community is a medium to fulfil social aims and situations, and its manifestation. The latter is truly representing the individual’s power.

A consequence is seemingly the inescapable reflexivity that provides us with a desire and obligation to personalize and customize. An aspect not only visible in residential situations, perhaps even stronger regarding goods and the welfare society (i.e. choosing healthcare, schools or services). It is possible to state that it is evident in the case of social relations as well, visible in many of the interviews. They regard it as important to possess all personal capabilities to establish the desired social contract.

– [...] social relationships and social networks now have to be individually chosen; social ties, too, are becoming reflexive, so that they have to be established, maintained and constantly renewed by individuals.
(Beck et al. 2001, p. 35)

This is not a matter to neglect, but important to discuss and bear in mind. The built environment is the catalyst for re-establishing the social contract that is regarded necessary and many times it is dismissed as trivial

TVÄ DAGAR

LÖRDAG 15 MARS 2014

GRÀCIA

*Barcelonas
Majorna
behagar*

GÖR DET SJÄLV - ELLER DÖ*

*DEVIS I TI

Gör det själv, eller
DIY som begreppet

Abel, E., 2014. Collage: do-it-yourself or die. Is this the way society we should
regard ourselves and what are the consequences?

aspects few care for. By taking these aspects seriously and not as something that is successful only outside the standard, the social reflexivity could extend to areas where it makes a crucial difference. It is questionable who has the power over this reestablishment, since it risks being more private than what is favourable. In addition, it is necessary that it manifests the delicate balance between individuality and collective aspects that are the arena for the sociality.

To categorize the social life of the residential community is proven a difficulty. However, that it is a phenomenon and product of present times is obvious, within in the continuum of modernity. The social contract that is established within the cohousing unit does not explain it as a societal, individualist reaction: in this sense it is incongruous to being an individual *Gesellschaft*. On the other hand it is not the intimate *Gemeinschaft* either. Berggren and Trägårdh describes the duplicity in how we regard the organization of the relationship between individuals and the state (2009, p. 51), similarly, the same alliance is shaped within the residential community. The individual stands free by choice. This emphasis on individual rights position the residential community in late modernity. Contradictory enough it becomes something of a *Gesellschaft* relationship to a *Gemeinschaft*. A bit complicated and difficult to grasp but what is present within these terms is an understanding for the reasoning and meaning of living in a residential community. This is useful in order to explain the spans of sociality that one can encounter, together with their meaning. As a prerequisite, intimacy and casualness are demanding different aspects. Within the case study examples, we see a span from social meaning deriving from freedom and spontaneity, or through sharing experiences and labour. It is an important aspect to analyse and understand, pragmatically and conceptually, since the community is a way to escape the personal alienation, which is one of the major threats in late modernity.

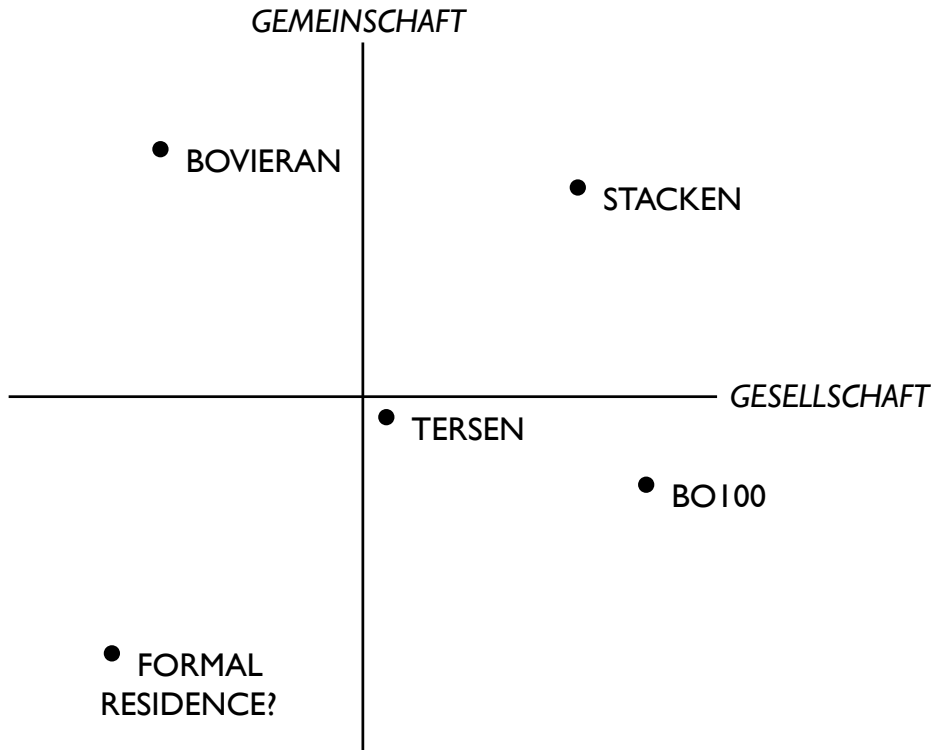


Figure that attempts to show the aim and execution of the various case studies, compared with standard dwellings. To what extent do the community base its survival on sociality or collaborative duties? How is the residential community perceived?

This escapism from a gathering of forced do-it-yourself biographies is about creating the weak ties, discussed in the interview study, not seldom as a remedy. Doubtfully and a times problematic, the ties are chosen and personal. Describing them as casual and in personal control, the residents perceive them as a way to escape the solitary harshness of the outside world. Not at least Granovetter (1984) and Olsson (Olsson et al., 1997) prove these weak ties successful and a key to resilient development, commonly neglected since they are difficult to argue for. To discuss and develop an understanding for them is important to deconstruct the exclusivity they tend to get within an intimate community, and make them achievable in other places. This is already visible in other fronts, for instance in social media, where they form a reaction to a cold *Gesellschaft* that society is transforming into. Being less visible in the residences is reflected by the slowness and reluctance to transform and develop the building sector. Is it possible to anchor these in other projects, where tenants have less interest or capabilities to join the effort demanding cohousing projects? Bo100 is definitely an attempt, and a fairly successful where municipality, tenants and architects cooperate in order to create a good social and physical residential situation, certainly an example of resilience. Communities also tend to fail, for example Stacken or Bo100, as rules are experienced too strong or too weak, decisions are taken without anchoring them amongst the residents or the equally distributed power is collected within a clique.

What we get a glimpse of is the threat that even stronger individualization causes: an inability and incapacity to cooperate. As Sennett states: alienation and isolation is the true enemy of active cooperation (Sennett, 2012, p. 166), if one would assume that cooperative abilities are necessary for social resilience. It is a risk with the *Gesellschaft* relationship to the community, the pure necessity of a shared act to survive (Sennett, 2002, p. 223, Berggren et al., 2009, p. 364). This seems hard to establish, and threatening, since

personal expression and mind often is dominant. At the same time, the lack of cooperation points precisely at its own threat: alienation within the group. A feature encountered in many of the interviews, as a weakened community leads to isolation, resulting in less cooperative aspects. The risk is that we end up in a vacuum of no social life, being out of every capability of establishing social contracts. Of course, it is dystopian and exaggerated to regard us as hollow shells without capacities to cooperate, but it is important to regard the issue where cooperation comes from. As Sennett believes, it is certainly problematic when the community is based on collective being, rather than action (Sennett, 2002, p. 223), because what is it then based upon? The individuals even stronger maintain their independence towards the community. Being dependent on the social bonds, groups that are too vague, too strong or without a common goal are malfunctioning, not at all different from any general group dynamics and an important conclusion too bear in mind.

In order to continue discussing the double picture of the residential community, we will come back to the span of public and private both within social ties as its manifestations. A prejudicial opinion of living in communality is that it is without boundaries. On the contrary, privacy is perceived as a virtue within the residential communities, or rather the possibility of having the scale from intimacy to public. The private life has abilities to reach out into a public part, where consciousness and respect for others is created. This conceptual appearance is a part of resilient urban development and an issue that shows residential community life as the positive and well-balanced act it can be. The spontaneity, unfear and integrative aspect they represent are certainly desired in residential development. A more negative aspect is that as easily as a mutual understanding is created, as easily it is to be an alienated, separate group. The phrase "*it's us against the world*" could as romantic as it seems, be as problematic (compare with Sennett's threats).

The social group within the residential community acts under the threat of individual alienation; the unit is exposed for the same relation to society when individuals start dictating cooperation and weak ties.

I suggest that the crossover-residential solution that cohousing represents is important, the aspects are also important on a larger scale, because what the title suggests, it is about empowered and empowering people. Not at all weakening our profession as architects, but aiming for avoiding the gap between the built, the user and the creator. What this work assures is that it is not as easy to reject collective ideas as one would presume, because undoubtedly the ideas are not about forming collectiveness, they are revolving around the concept of forming a context. Residential communities represent a deepened contact between individuals. It is a counteraction of the individualization theories that we have been discussing and on the other side, the risk of cohousing is to stagnate as a private matter being a far more dangerous aspect than what is addressed. Unquestionably, it is a product of the same individualization it repels.

To work with the issues demands sensitive consideration. It is not as easily done to create the stabile empowerment of the residents that is needed for a resilient residential future. Unmistakably, there is a balance between dictation and participation, the studied projects have shown that this is a necessary reflection to do and to be aware of. As architects, we possess the capability to discuss why and how the residential community is important to care for. To make space for the social life and social reality that is desired is not as easy as it appears, but a fundamental part of the profession. Seldom we interact with political, economical or even sustainable issues since this takes time and effort, or we fear losing commissions. Having the adequate knowledge gives power and an ability to question, debate and discuss, not at least to incorporate that knowledge and visions. It is necessary to design for the casually, but also to design the process because the idea about a

dwelled milieu reaches beyond the artefact, forming development that is including instead of excluding. The residential community can be far more incorporated than today often being rationalized away as costly or less important.

Only through investigation of this unconventional, yet increasingly more common way of living, we can understand what it means and for whom these issues are important. To conclude, the residential community is not what it is presupposed to be, but a product of the contemporary. Definitely with possibilities of excluding unwanted aspects, equally praised by all community lovers. At the same time, caring for the collective disregards individualized values that remove the last exclaves of cooperation and social capital in public life. Without doubt, individuals make up the community, and the individual position and benefit is accounted prior to the collective, the individuals are together on their own and on their prerequisites.

For further consideration, it is important to bear in mind the following question: how much private individualized initiatives and segregated development can we accept?

– We are cohousing neighbours. A bit more than only neighbours, we have some things that connect us. [...] to an extent, I regard them as relatives. I have to stand them, but I know how they work... just as my relatives, we must live with each other. (GF4)

Last thoughts

As the work is about to end, I have realized that this process that I have begun is by no means finished. I have only started it and have perhaps most importantly understood the necessity of discussing phenomena that emerge, at times regarded as obvious, and that I initially regard as positive. In the beginning I imagined the work and the process to be clear, almost linear with a final end and a result. These terms, the result, have instead transformed into an untouchable goal, something I aim and strive for. S. Westin describes the work of conducting research as “moving towards an horizon”, on the contrary of having a set boundary and limit with a clear destination and end (Westin, 2010, p. 299). The work has at times made unexpected turns, a process that has been demanding, but often resulting in evident results.

Writing and forming this subject, I have tried to avoid taking stand in favour of or against the issues and objects encountered. However, I have realized the importance of community and the inseparable relationship it has to the manifestation, or artefact. It is inevitable to be occupied with this relationship within the architectural profession; however, it is often neglected for economic reasons or disinterest. Additionally, I have realized that there are as many formal creations of residential communities as there are informal. Yet, the latter often lack adequate physical connections, but is tremendously important. I believe that these formations are a necessary part for our context and our residences in order to be able to take shared control of the presence, frequently a collective situation. To examine these connections and their [developed] affinities are a crucial continuation of this work and necessary to display the challenges we are meeting in a residential future, consisting of a mosaic of differentiated lifestyles. The integrative togetherness is a proven and necessary path to explore that emerges.

What one can hope is that the premises for a resilient social development will continue to be questioned and discussed, and not at least explored, simply because we must do it. Too much development is simply proceeding without reflection, both standard and normalized, as well as what materializes as fresh newcomers, solely because we are in lack of support of something that makes people included. As architects we cannot shape the social meanings in residential communities, however we can be aware of them and understand how they are important for residential situations and a necessary resilience. There are unexpected and positive solutions out there and I find it most exciting and intriguing and I hope, I cannot but continue to explore these.



Axelsson, J., 2014. The gate at Bo100 viewed from the courtyard.
How does the community interact with urbanity?



INFOGRUPPEN

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Stadgruppen är en arbetsgrupp som arbetar med att utvärdera och förbättra stadens verksamhet. Gruppen består av representanter från de olika stadsdelarna och från kommunstyrelsen. Gruppen har till uppgift att utvärdera stadens verksamhet och att förbereda förslag till beslut för kommunstyrelsen.

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Stadgruppen

Stadgruppen



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