Towards a more sustainable built environment?

- Structural factors surrounding design, construction and management of home environments are increasingly seen as instrumental aspects of the environmental, social and financial impact associated with the housing sector.
- In addition, a growing body of research emphasizes socio-cultural and behavioral aspects among residents as influencing domestic resource intensity.

A ‘regular residents’ perspective

- A mixed methods approach was used to explore perceptions and representations of home, sustainable housing development and resource use among residents in a typical private housing cooperative in Sweden, particularly with regards to attitudes towards alternative practices related to sharing resources and/or space, lowering living standards or compact living.
- Questionnaires were distributed to households in the area (n=156) and a follow-up in-depth interview study was moreover conducted (n=22).

“It’s just a matter of adjustment”

- Residents are already sharing multiple functions within the housing complex, which is quite common in this type of private cooperative association.
- A conditional approach appears prevalent, where a proposed push for sharing or ‘sufficiency’ practices can be weighed up by attractive and/or smooth solutions increasing quality of life in other ways. Several of the interviewees point to the adaptive nature of people, where one can get used to just about anything if need be (although few are reportedly willing to engage in such changes).

Model for reconceptualization?

Beyond a normative development

- Residents in study are generally positive towards green building and reduction of resource use in the built environment and society as a whole.
- Yet, current housing trends are enforced in terms of convenience and social representation and salient norms regarding the ideal home and a housing career are widespread, with implicit increase in resource intensity (in the form of e.g. seaside villas).
- Overall slightly positive attitude among residents towards resource sharing and forms of co-housing, yet based on pragmatic motivation rather than ideology and social conviction.
- Incremental levels of collaborative space and resource use appear relevant to pursue for broader acceptance of alternative home-related practices.