SOLO but not ALONE

A Co-Housing Solution for Single Parents

Therese Alégroth
Examiner: Anna Braide
Supervisor: Kaj Granath
Chalmers University of Technology 2025
Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering

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Chalmers School of Architecture
Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering
Master's programme of
Architecture and Urban design (MPARC)

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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis has explored how co-housing can be designed to support single parents by both reducing overall housing costs and contributing to more community, cooperation, and access to social safety nets. The background is that single parents often have a weaker economic position, limited social networks, and greater everyday responsibilities. This affects not only the parents themselves but can also influence their children's well-being and future opportunities. Traditional forms of housing are rarely adapted to their life situation, and there is a limited range of housing options that promote sharing and community without compromising privacy.

The work has been conducted through a research-based design process where literature studies, statistics, surveys, reference projects, and study visits formed the basis of the analysis. The results have been compiled into design strategies focusing on reducing private living space in favor of shared functions, as well as creating social areas that encourage spontaneous meetings and cooperation in everyday life.

The final design proposal presents a co-housing model where private apartments are complemented by shared spaces for cooking, play, and social interaction. By sharing resources and spaces, both construction costs and environmental impact can be reduced, while providing residents with access to social support that can ease everyday burdens. However, the intention was not to create an "isolated" housing project solely for single parents, as a diverse residential environment is considered valuable. By including both private and shared spaces for all residents, the project aimed to strengthen the sense of community within the building while also reducing housing costs.

The work demonstrates that co-housing can function as a daily social safety net, provided that the architectural design balances community with the need for privacy. An important conclusion is that co-housing should not be seen merely as a niche form of housing but as a relevant alternative in a housing market where many life situations currently lack suitable solutions. The study also emphasizes the importance of creating housing with mixed target groups, where single parents, older people, and other households can support each other in a shared environment.

KEYWORDS
Co-housing, single parents,, community living

THERESE ALÉGROTH

MPARC Architecture and Urban Design

Contact Details
0738344456
therese.alegroth@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Master
Chalmers Architecture and Urban Design
2023-2025

Master studios
2024
ACE505 - Housing Inventions 2
ACE520 - Residential healthcare: Housing for seniors

2023
ACE465 - Urban prototypes

Master Courses
2024
ACE360 - Nordic Architecture
ACE420 - Architectural Competitions

2023
ACE400 - Architecture in the Anthropocene
ACE380 - Sustainable development and the design professions

Bachelor
Chalmers - Architecture and Engineering
2020-2023

01. INTRODUCTION

THESIS FRAMEWORK

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

In today's society, single parents face several challenges, both economic and social. Single parents are more concerned about their finances than cohabiting parents (Sifo survey "Ensamstående föräldrars ekonomi" 2023). Since they only have a single income, it can be difficult for them to cover high housing costs combined with the additional expenses that children bring. This can be especially noticeable in cities where there is a housing shortage. At the same time, single parents may experience social isolation and a lack of a support network in daily life, which can affect both their well-being and their children's upbringing. Traditional housing solutions are rarely designed to meet these social needs, leaving single parents to navigate both financial and everyday challenges on their own.

This project aims to address these issues by proposing a co-housing model that combines smaller private living spaces with larger shared areas. By sharing spaces such as kitchens, living rooms, playing areas, and other functions, housing costs can be reduced while also fostering a stronger social community. This can also serve as a social safety net where neighbors support each other in everyday life, something particularly valuable for single parents. However, the intention is not to create an "isolated" housing community exclusively for single parents; it is beneficial to have a diverse residential environment with a mix of different households.

Beyond the social and economic aspects, the project also takes into account the ongoing housing and climate crisis. New ways of thinking about housing are needed, and co-housing is sustainable on multiple levels, not only in terms of social sustainability but also in how resources are distributed. A strong collective spirit, where tools and equipment are shared within the building, can reduce overall consumption among residents.

From an architectural perspective, the project will explore how shared living environments can function as a form of social safety net while also being both economically affordable and environmentally sustainable. The goal is to create a balance between private and shared spaces, individual and collective living, in order to develop a housing model that can improve the quality of life for single parents and their children.

DISCOURSE

As housing costs rise, housing shortages persist, and family structures change, the discussion around alternative housing solutions has become more important. Particularly in an urban context, there is a growing discourse on co-housing and its potential to reduce both social isolation and financial burden. Previous research has examined co-housing as an alternative solution to both housing shortages and social vulnerability, but there are few specific studies focusing on single parents and co-housing. By exploring how shared living environments can function as social safety nets, this project aims to contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable and inclusive housing.

CONTRIBUTION

This project contributes to research by exploring how co-housing can be adapted for single parents, a group that often faces challenges in the traditional housing market. By proposing a housing model that combines economic sustainability with social community, both social and architectural challenges are addressed.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to investigate how co-housing can be adapted for single parents and how it can contribute to increased economic, social, and ecological sustainability. By combining private and shared spaces, the project aims to create a living environment that reduces the financial burden on single parents, while also strengthening social networks and community. The project also seeks to challenge traditional housing models by exploring how architectural design can promote the sharing of resources and collaboration among residents.

The study has an interdisciplinary aim that touches on architecture, social sustainability, and housing policy, with the goal of developing a housing model that can serve as an alternative solution for single parents in urban environments.

AIM

- **Economic sustainability**, reducing living costs through shared resources in a co-housing
- **Social community and support**, creating shared spaces that promote support, collaboration, and community.
- **Space-efficient housing**, design functional and compact apartments.
- **Well-being for the residents,** providing them with opportunities for increased well-being.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can affordable co-housing apartments be designed to support the needs of single parents?

SUB-QUESTIONS

- What spatial and social needs do single parents have, and how can shared spaces in co-housing be designed to support them?

- How can co-housing be designed to be both affordable and environmentally sustainable for single parents?

READING INSTRUCTIONS

The thesis is divided in 4 chapters, as follows: Introduction, Research, Design proposal & Discussion. That is also the suggested order to read.

Introduction
A presentation of the framework of the thesis and the background.

Research
History
Single parents
Survey
Reference Project
Study trips

+ Site Analysis

Design Proposal

METHOD

RESEARCH FOR DESIGN

Literature review
The literature study was conducted to gather more information on the subject by reading about and analyzing both its history and how it functions today. Both co-housing and information about single parents were examined. This method was chosen to gain a broader understanding of the topic and to collect knowledge from existing research, which could then be implemented into the design proposal.

Survey
A survey was conducted to gather more information about shared and private spaces in a co-housing setting and to understand the opinions of single parents on these aspects. It provided ideas and insights on how these spaces should be distributed within the building.

Site visit
During the site visit, the surroundings were analyzed. The surrounding traffic and roads were examined, as well as the materials and design of the nearby buildings.

Statitics
Statistics concerning single-parent families, housing, and the chosen site were examined in order to gain more background and understanding of quantitative facts about these areas. This was then compiled to identify the insights that could be drawn.

SUB-QUESTIONS CONNECTION WITH METHODS:

"*What spatial and social needs do single parents have, and how can shared spaces in co-housing be designed to support them?*" is connected to:

- Survey, to identify needs, challenges and wishes.
- Reference projects.
- Literature review.
- Study visit to a co-housing with a lot of single families.
- Research by design, how the layouts can affect the community and cooperation within the building.

RESEARCH ON DESIGN

Reference projects
Existing co-housing projects, aimed or partially aimed at single parents, was analyzed with a particular focus on the building's layout and the distribution of private and shared spaces.

Study visit
Study visits were conducted at two different co-housing buildings. This was done to gain an understanding of how shared and private spaces are used in co-housing, as well as to gather valuable insights from the residents perspectives.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

The lessons from research for and on design were collected and led to design strategies to help shape the design proposal.

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

In the final phase, the lessons are compiled in an iterative process through drawings and 3D models. The final design proposal is a co-housing project for single parents, shared with other residents to create a more varied and integrated environment.

"*How can co-housing be designed to be both affordable and environmentally sustainable for single parents*?" is connected to:

- Literature review.
- Research by design, experiments on space effiency and shared spaces.

THEORY

The thesis is based on both social and architectural theories. It explores how design can impact on community and wellbeing. It also looks into sustainability, both with materials, and how co-housing can help with social sustainability. It explores both co-housing principles and reference projects.

SCOPE & DELIMITATIONS

YES	SOME	NO
SOCIAL		
CO-housing	Loneliness	
Family	Affordability	
Sharing	Community	
SUSTAINABILITY		
Social sustainability	Material	Climate neutral/positive
Space effecient		Biodiversity
DESIGN		
Functional	Flexible	Artistic
Shared and private		Technology
		Urban planning

RELEVANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This project is relevant to sustainable development in several ways. By exploring how co-housing can be adapted for single parents, it addresses social, economic, and ecological sustainability.Social sustainability is achieved by creating a living environment that strengthens social networks and also improves the quality of life for a group that often faces challenges in the housing market. By promoting community and shared resources, the housing model can contribute to increased security and more social connections.

Economic sustainability is achieved by reducing individual housing costs, thus enabling a more resource-efficient way of living. By sharing spaces, resources, and functions, residents can lower their expenses while also gaining access to better housing environments than they would otherwise be able to afford.

Ecological sustainability is a key part of the project as it examines a housing model where resources are used more efficiently. By sharing resources, the need for private consumption decreases, leading to a lower environmental impact. Additionally, the project can incorporate sustainable building materials and strategies to reduce climate impact, making it part of the larger transition toward more sustainable development.

By integrating these three aspects of sustainability, the project can contribute to developing alternative housing solutions that are both long-term sustainable and inclusive.

02. RESEARCH

WHAT IS CO-HOUSING?

Shared housing, also known as Co-housing, is an umbrella term for housing designed to be shared. Like many other words starting with “co-,” it represents collectivity and collaboration. The broader term co-housing includes several types of shared living arrangements, which can vary in terms of organization, size, and housing tenure.

Beck (2019) explains that the word community refers to a group of people living in separate homes close to each other while socially interacting. In contrast, the “co-” in co-housing also implies the sharing of common spaces and collective decision-making. Shared housing models can be either open or closed to outsiders—some invite interaction with the surrounding community, while others maintain a more private structure.

Summary of Shared Housing Models (Vestbro, 2000) & (Grundström, 2021)

Classical Co-Housing (1935-1978)
- Staff-provided services
- Created to reduce household labor and help women balance work and family.

Co-Housing ("Kollektivhus") (1978→)
- Private apartments combined with shared spaces such as dining areas and gardens.
- Residents actively participate in planning and maintenance of the building.
- Encourages community while allowing independence.
- Can be cooperative, rental, or condominium-based.

Bogemenskap (Community Living)
- Similar to co-housing but with an even stronger emphasis on social interaction.
- Often managed by an association.
- Involves shared daily activities such as meals and group events.
- Can be cooperative, rental, or condominium-based.

Co-Living
- Private bedrooms and bathrooms, with shared spaces like kitchens and living rooms.
- Often short-term rental contracts.
- Common in big cities and among young adults.

Senior Co-Housing
- Designed for older adults, focusing on social interaction and activities.
- Often includes shared meals, exercise, and care-related services.
- Can be cooperative, rental, or condominium-based.

Residential Hotels
- Apartment complexes with staff and more "luxurious" shared spaces.
- "Like living in a hotel, but at home."
- Typically condominium-based.

These housing models differ in their practical applications, but they all share a combination of private and communal spaces. Grundström uses the term "housing designed to be shared" to define homes intentionally designed to include shared spaces and functions. She points out that while these models are often labeled co-housing, the “co-” can stand for different concepts such as “collaborative,” “community,” and “collective.”

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CO-HOUSING

Already during the 1850s, there were ideas about collective housing of various kinds both in the USA and Europe. (Vestbro, 1979) The author Carl Jonas Love Almqvist advocated in 1850 that collective housing could abolish gender discrimination. He believed that the family needed to be abolished as an economic unit. His proposal was a “universal hotel” where there were no individual households, and meals were eaten in a common dining hall. One of the biggest disadvantages of the family household, he argued, was that each household cooked its own food, which he considered unnecessarily expensive, foolish, and time-consuming. August Strindberg also had opinions about collective housing. He visited a collective housing project in Guise in 1885 and was very positive about the idea. He wrote about what he saw as its advantages: “Every man and every wife had their own room. The wife was no longer dependent on the husband, and the husband no longer the wife's beast of burden.” (Utopias in Reality, 1885) However, the authors’ ideas about the collective did not receive much response, but they lived on as a utopian ideal.

Per Albin Hansson argued as early as 1907 for a “cooperation of households”; he proposed a “household communism,” where 100 families would share the domestic work. However, he noted that women were not positive toward the idea. The first Swedish collective house was not created as a response to ideals of gender equality, but as a response to the middle class’s difficulty in finding domestic servants. This led to a need for more rational housing with collective services. The first residence of this type was completed in 1909, Hemgården Centralkök in Stockholm. The building was not described as a hotel, but as a structure with regular apartments where only the kitchen and servants' rooms had been removed, resulting in lower housing costs. The apartments had two to five rooms and were connected to the kitchen via food elevators that delivered meals three times a day. During the First World War, the company that owned the building went bankrupt, and the building was converted into condominiums.

A branch within architecture that embraced the idea of shared housing was the functionalists, they believed that more rational housing should be built and made accessible to everyone. Le Corbusier designed proposals for larger residential complexes with collective services during the 1920s. The functionalists in Sweden predicted in their manifesto “Acceptera” (1930) that the family hotel or collective house would become one of the three housing forms of the future, along with the rental apartment building and the private villa.

In the early 1930s, the word “collective house” was used for the first time, inspired by the collectively organized housing in the Soviet Union during the 1920s, American apartment hotels, and European examples. The debate arose again, led by individuals connected to the labor movement. The working class's housing conditions were miserable, usually consisting of one room and a kitchen lacking water, sewage, and central heating. Despite the poor quality of working-class housing, it fostered community and cooperation. During the 1930s, the idea of collective housing also began to gain more support among politically active working women. Collective houses built with the aim of cooperation, not division of labor, could improve the working class’s housing situation while preserving their tradition.

One of the first collective houses in Sweden was built by the foundation Fredric Eens minne in 1933, a collective house for single, working mothers. The foundation was established in 1912, “to provide housing on affordable terms for impoverished, single women and care and support for their children” (Stockholmsskällan, 2025). The residences consisted of 47 rooms with kitchenettes, the toilets and bathrooms were shared by the residents. The building also included daycare facilities for infants and older children.

In Sweden at that time, it was primarily Sven Markelius, in collaboration with the politician Alva Myrdal, who initially devoted themselves to collective housing. They designed a proposal for a larger project in Alvik, but it was never built. Instead, a smaller project was constructed in Stockholm in 1935, where Markelius himself moved in. On the ground floor there was a dairy shop, daycare center, dining hall, and a restaurant that served meals to the residents via food elevators. The building contained 54 apartments, most of them with two rooms. The residents were served by hired staff and were not themselves involved in the building’s services. For 30 years, the house functioned as a collective before it was de-collectivized. Several other collective houses were built in Stockholm around 1935–46, including the YK-house and a collective house for single women in Stadshagen. (Mellander, 2011)

A builder who was deeply involved in collective housing was Olle Engkvist. In 1938, the collective residence Smaragden was built, consisting of 20 smaller apartments with kitchenettes for single women. The collective services included a restaurant, laundry and cleaning services, and there was also a sports room and a common room. The house functioned as a collective until 1976. Engkvist also built more collective houses for women,Elfvinggården (1940), Lundagård (1941), as well as for families with children: Marieberg (1944), Nockeby Family Hotel (1952), and Hässelby Family Hotel (1955). Hässelby Family Hotel was the last, but also the largest of Engkvist’s collective houses. The building consisted of 330 apartments with 1–5 rooms and a kitchen. There was also a restaurant, cleaning service, daycare center, after-school center, dry cleaning, and a banquet hall. During the 1960s, a women’s group formed in the building that lobbied to live in a collective house. The residents ended up in conflict with the owner. In 1976, the restaurant in the building was closed down due to rising staff costs and difficulties in finding personnel. The tenants then took matters into their own hands and handled the cooking for about 100 people for nearly three years before the building’s owner shut them out.

It was in connection with the growing women’s movement in the 1960s that the idea of collective housing was seriously revived, as several women’s organizations demanded collective houses. However, many of the earlier collective houses had been de-collectivized, which negatively influenced the momentum. Part of the debate focused on the notion that collective houses, with their level of service, catered more to the wealthy. In 1974, Stockholm Municipality’s Women’s Committee emphasized that washing and cleaning should be tasks that all healthy adults could manage themselves. Instead, the idea of safety, community, and opportunities for social interaction was highlighted as something to strive for.

> *The trend toward more and more one- and two-person households, as well as the increasing number of divorces, also points to the need for a new type of housing with opportunities for spontaneous contact, preferably indoors. The nuclear family, consisting of mother, father, and children, is today clearly in the minority, yet housing is still mainly planned for nuclear families. Many believe that the collective house can help reduce isolation and alienation in society.” (Vestbro, 1979, p. 18)*

In the late 1970s, many women’s organizations continued to demand more collective houses, and those that existed had long waiting lists. Despite this, there was still hesitation about building new ones. However, in the municipality of Linköping, a collective house similar to Hässelby Family Hotel was built in 1979. The collective, Stolplyckan, consists of 190 apartments, distributed across 13 stairwells. They vary in size and are aimed at different types of tenants. The building is still used as a collective house today.

In his 1979 book, Vestbro writes about the uncertainty that prevailed around 1979 among housing policymakers, architects, and women’s organizations regarding what type of collective houses should be built, how large they should be, what services they should include, and whether it was even worthwhile to build collective houses: *“In a collective house, special demands must be made to ensure that the residents have influence over and actively take responsibility for the collective services.”* (Vestbro, 1979) During the 1980s, the idea of collective housing began to shift, it came to focus more on cooperation in household tasks such as cooking and maintenance, compared to earlier models that had staff managing these tasks. (Caldenby, 2021)

The Million Program (1965-75) was a response to the housing shortage of the time, and a large number of homes were built. However, towards the end of the program, a shift occurred as many people preferred living in single-family houses, leaving many apartments vacant. The large housing complexes were impersonal and did not foster a sense of community among the residents. It was this desire for community, cooperation, and equality that became the focus of the collective housing movement. Smaller shared living arrangements became more popular among young people, who shared smaller houses or larger apartments. By around 1980, there were at least 200 such smaller collectives consisting of six or seven members. (Caldenby, 2021) This led to the creation of BIG (Bo i Gemenskap, "Living in Community") by 10 women in Stockholm, several of whom were architects or journalists. BIG had four principles: no more than 20-50 residents, shared household chores such as cooking and cleaning, all residents having the right to

participate in decision-making, and a varied group of residents. These principles eventually led to the redesign of two buildings from the Million Program into collective housing in collaboration with Chalmers School of Architecture. (Caldenby, 2021)

The collective house Stacken was created from an empty tower block from 1969. Professor Lars Ågren from Chalmers handled the design in collaboration with Siv Carlsson and also the recruitment of tenants, while the housing company financed the renovation. In 1980, 55 adults moved in, most of whom were from the lower middle class. The most common household type was single adults, but there were also families with adults and children, as well as single mothers with children. In 1985, a similar collective house, Trädet, was created, also designed in collaboration with Chalmers and owned by a municipal housing company. Both buildings still function as collective housing today. Trädet has the strongest sense of community and cooperation within the house, with shared dinners, while Stacken operates more individually. Between 1980 and 2000, around 50 collective houses were built. However, during the 1990s, Sweden's focus on "good housing for all" ended, and state subsidies were replaced with a market solution, which led construction companies to prefer building cooperative condominiums to ensure they could generate revenue. Collective houses are still being built in this form, but they are now more targeted toward those with higher incomes. However, collective houses are also built as rental apartments. "Under samma tak" was completed in 2020, but it required significant involvement from the association of the same name for the construction to take place. The association was created in 2009, and the construction started 9 years later.

In 2009, a new type of shared housing came to Sweden: Residential Hotels. These were marketed as living in a hotel, but at home! They are luxurious accommodations with full service and many shared spaces, requiring no personal contribution or cooperation between residents. The lack of affordable housing and the difficulty for young people to enter the housing market led to another new form of shared housing, "co-living hubs." In this type of housing, services like cleaning are included, but all areas except the bedrooms are shared. The first building of this kind, Colive Lab, opened in 2020 in Stockholm. Several other co-living hubs have been built or are planned to be built in Sweden, and what most of them have in common is that residents only have a bedroom, with everything else shared. Co-living hubs and residential hotels are at opposite ends of a spectrum, one with everything shared except the bedrooms, and the other with large, luxurious apartments. However, what they have in common, which sets them apart from regular co-housing, is that they offer full service and require no collective work, they are simply about shared living.

Key focus ponts

Historical Development: From early 20th-century ideas of shared living and service, collective housing evolved with a spirit of community and cooperation, to newer trends driven by market forces and the needs of young people. The idea of collective housing and cooperation still remains, but other forms of shared living are on the rise.
Women's Role: The development of collective housing was intertwined with the women's rights movement, particularly in the 1960s and 70s. Several of the first collective houses were created to provide women with the opportunity to work.
Economic and Social Shifts: The development of collective housing models as a response to urbanization, a way to address vacant housing from the million-program, and the various needs of modern society.
Co-living vs. Co-housing: While co-housing emphasizes cooperation and shared responsibility, co-living models focus more on shared spaces but often offer the convenience of full service with less communal involvement.

SINGLE PARENTS WELLBEING & HOUSING

SINGLE PARENTS & WELLBEING

"*Being a parent is the most difficult and the most rewarding job in the world.*" (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020) In "Parenthood and Well-Being: A Decade in Review," parenthood and well-being are examined. Having children and raising the next generation is a great responsibility, but it can also provide meaning and purpose in life. A parent's well-being also affects the child's well-being; a parent's poor mental health can lead to deficiencies in the child's development. Nomaguchi & Milkie show that economic insecurity, stress over social relationships, child care, and upbringing are contributing factors to negative well-being. However, it is also mentioned that parenthood is a "mixed bag" with both joy, meaningful and rewarding experiences, but also challenges and burdensome caregiving. This mix can tip toward the positive or negative, and it can also be influenced by the parent's access to support and a social network. One factor that increases a parent's well-being is spending time with their children, but household chores or work load can reduce this time, which can lead to stress among parents over not being able to spend as much time as they would like with their children. This stress can lead to sleep problems, anger, and psychological distress. Regarding single parents, Nomaguchi & Milkie write that the relationship between parenthood and happiness is less positive for singles than for couples. Single parenthood is also associated with more work/family conflicts, greater pressure, stress, and sadness compared to families with two parents. It is stated that these negative aspects of single parenthood can be reduced through more support for single parents, which a 2018 study shows leads to a smaller gap in life satisfaction between single mothers and mothers in partnerships.

A single-parent family's access to social support was directly related to their mental and physical health (Hanson, 1986). In the article "Healthy Single Families," the journal examines how different factors affect the health of single-parent families, and one of the most important factors was indeed social support. Another important factor was good communication, although this was considered slightly more important by the children than by the parent. A study conducted by Richards & Schmiege (1993) highlighting the problems faced by single parents showed that money was the biggest issue among mothers. A problem faced by both mothers and fathers was task overload, not having anyone to share chores with and having to combine work and family responsibilities. Several respondents also reported feeling lonely and having difficulties maintaining their social lives. Several of the fathers surveyed stated that the relationship with their ex-partner was a challenge. But the study also highlights perceived strengths as a parent, which were:
Parenting skills - Supporting the children and fostering independence.
Personal growth - Feeling accomplished and maintaining a positive attitude.
Communication - Building a sense of honesty and trust with the children.
Family management - Being able to organize and be dependable.

SINGLE PARENTS & HOUSING

The increased proportion of single parents leads to changing housing needs (Anthony et al., 1990). In the paper "Housing Perceptions of Low-Income Single Parents," the authors express that the housing and needs of the single-parent group need to be explored further. The existing research about single parents focused more on other aspects of single parenthood, such as childrearing, divorce, external support, and finances. Anthony et al. highlight that a single parent's housing also affects their life satisfaction, but they also raise the question of whether single parents have different housing needs compared to two-parent families? A study conducted among single parents shows that safety and maintenance are important for them to be satisfied with their housing. A second study was conducted in which both single and cohabiting parents were examined. The results indicate that the respondents' residential satisfaction differed between single and cohabiting parents. For the cohabiting parents, parking and maintenance were the most

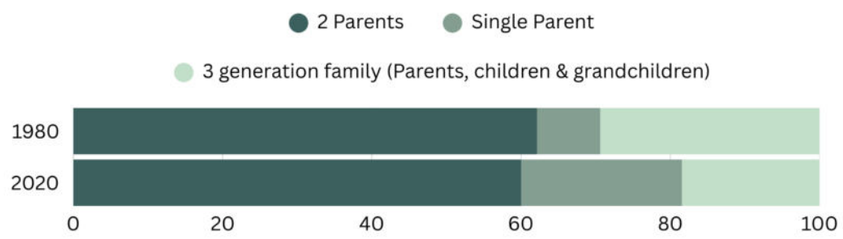
important aspects, but for single parents, the condition of the housing, neighbors, and building management were considered the most important. However, Anthony et al. discuss how many conclusions can really be drawn from Study I, since the sample size was small. It is highlighted, though, that the findings from Study II, that appearance/ condition and management of the building are important to single parents have also been found in studies by other authors. Another point mentioned is that different subgroups within single parents may have different needs and experiences.

The housing of single parents is also discussed by Klodawsky & Spector (1988). It is mentioned that single parents often have poorer financial situations and therefore spend a larger proportion of their income on housing. They thus face challenges both economically and in bearing the burden of raising and caring for a family alone, a task that would otherwise be shared by two parents. They further write that single-parent families usually rent their homes, and a larger proportion of single parents compared to other groups also live in dwellings that require renovation. Klodawsky & Spector establish housing criteria to evaluate what a single-parent family needs. These are:

Affordability – A lower income means that housing needs to be affordable.
Accessibility – Proximity to services, schools, and public transportation can be especially important for a single parent, as there isn't another adult to help with transporting the children.
Availability – Are there homes available for single-parent families, or are there reasons that hinder access to them?
Security of tenure – Is the housing long-term, or is it just a short-term lease?
Appropriateness of facilities for children – Are there nearby playgrounds or preschools, and is the housing itself child-friendly?
Opportunities for sharing and support – Sharing chores with other single parents or neighbors can help ease the burden of housework, transportation, and other stress. A home must therefore be designed to enable shared cooking and childcare.

SINGLE FAMILIES & CO-HOUSING

Children's relationships with their family and where they grow up affect their development, both physically and mentally. These relationships are important for healthy growth and development. (Matsumoto, 2024) In child-rearing social capital in collective housing in Japan, Matsumoto writes about how the family situation and the way they live in Japan has changed between 1980-2020:



Family sizes have shrunk from an average of 3.97 (1961) to 2.27 (2020). The changing family situations lead to fewer opportunities for children to interact with grandparents. Many tasks that used to be shared by several people must now be handled solely by the parents, which can be especially difficult for single parents with young children. All these tasks can cause significant pressure, mental, physical, and economic. Matsumoto investigates how co-housing can be an advantage for families with children. Sweden's version of co-housing was introduced in Japan around 1990. Ikuko Koyabe, one of the people who introduced it in Japan, describes it as a private housing complex with shared spaces as an extension of the private living area, where the environment provides both independence and support through the residents' involvement and cooperation. Matsumoto then writes that a way of living where residents support each other is especially beneficial for parents with children and summarizes the advantages:

- Reduces the burden of housework and increases efficiency, creating more free time and less mental stress for families.
- Children interact with adults from various backgrounds, increasing their life experience and social skills.
- Parents can build more relationships for support, both mentally and with tasks.

In 2003, Japan's first apartment complex run and maintained by its tenants was built. It consists of 28 apartments (24-62 sqm) on the second and third floors of a 12-story building. Most of the shared spaces, totaling 166 sqm, are located on the second floor, where there are also private apartments with their own bathrooms. On the third floor, there is an office, guest room, and storage, all shared. Over 20 years after its construction, it is still a well-functioning co-housing project, although the aging of some residents has required reconsideration of how work in the house is distributed. Matsumoto writes that this collective way of living is perceived to be gaining more support in Japan, but there are challenges for the model. The difficulty of building and maintaining them has been an obstacle, the two biggest problems seem to come from developers who doubt their profitability, as well as people's negative views of co-housing. Another issue may arise when people move into the building without understanding the shared workload, which can create conflicts.

REFLECTIONS REGARDING SINGLE FAMILIES WELLBEING & HOUSING

The research on single parents, well-being, and housing has provided a better understanding of the various challenges this group faces. One of the most important insight is the importance of social support, not only as practical help in everyday life, but also as a crucial component for mental, physical, and social health. Studies show that feelings of loneliness, overload of responsibility, and lack of time have a negative impact on both parents and children. At the same time, the research indicates that the living environment can help mitigate these strains.

Co-housing emerges as a potential tool for creating sustainable, safe, and supportive environments for single families that could otherwise risk being without a network. It also becomes clear that physical design and social structure must work together, architectural solutions can provide space and facilitate community and cooperation, but it is the residents who must carry them out. This forms the basis for the continued design work, where sharing, safety, and community are seen as key elements in the design proposal.

Design implications:

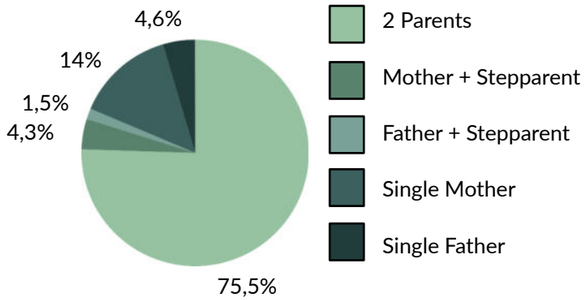
The design should be based on the actual needs of single parents, such as child-friendly environments, easily accessible features for daily tasks, and spaces that promote safety and community.
The design of shared spaces should promote everyday support, and social interaction, where the home functions as an extension of the social network.

STATISTICS - FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN 0-17 YEARS IN SWEDEN

To gain a better understanding of the situation of single parents in Sweden, statistics from Statistics Sweden (SCB) were examined in various relevant areas.

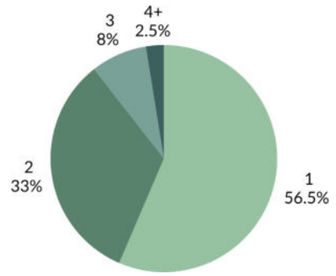
Number of children 0-17 years - 2 156 648

Living situation for children:



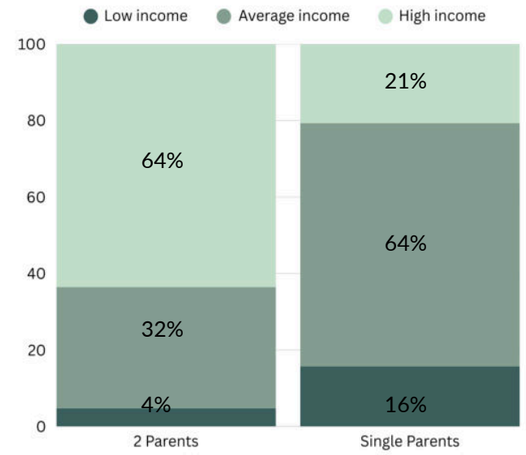
Number of single families: 255 188

Family sizes, number of children:



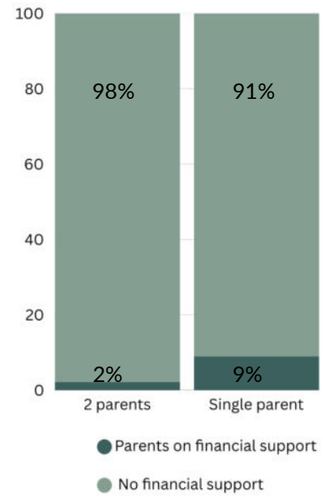
Economy for families

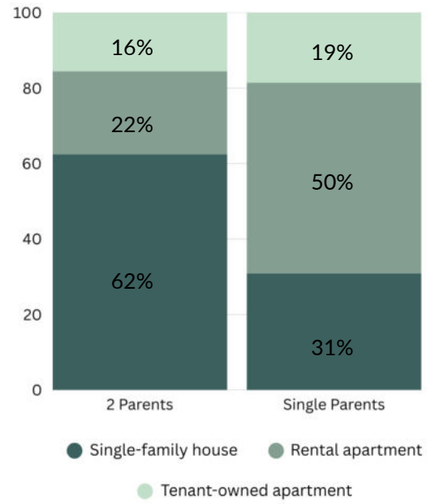
Income:



Income compared to median income:

Financial support:





Takeaway

Most children live with both of their parents, around 19% live with a single parent. 89.5% of single-parent families consist of 1–2 children.

Single parents have worse financial situations than cohabiting parents, they more often have lower incomes and a larger proportion receive financial support compared to parents living together.

When it comes to housing, half of single parents live in rental apartments, compared to 22% of cohabiting parents, this reflects their economic situation, as lower income makes it harder to own a home.

Design implication

Considering that the majority of single-parent families have 1–2 children, there is not a large demand for bigger apartments.

Affordable apartments are needed to make housing more accessible to single parents. Rental housing is also more accessible than owner-occupied housing.

CO-HOUSING - SUSTAINABIILITY & AFFORDABILITY

People living in co-housing have been shown to generate 20% less carbon emissions than average, through lower electricity consumption (Mellner et al., 2021). By saving space, contributing time, and sharing household appliances and other resources, co-housing can be a possible part of the solution to environmental challenges. An important theme in research on co-housing is environmental and climate issues, as co-housing is considered to contribute to more sustainable construction and living (Vamstad et al., 2024). The research can be divided into how environmentally and climate-friendly individual co-housing projects are, and the significance of sustainable construction and housing on a societal level. On an individual level, the environmental impact can vary greatly, some may save resources through sharing but otherwise live as usual, while others have a more pronounced environmental profile that permeates the housing. Certain research shows that architectural solutions alone are not sufficient to create environmentally friendly buildings and living, the residents' environmentally conscious engagement is required to maintain a sustainable building. It also shows that how wastemanagment is one way to make an impact, as well as how everyday activities are handled, such as food, transportation, and shared tools within the housing.

Other research from co-housing buildings in Austria and Denmark shows that residents have both a smaller environmental footprint and better well-being compared to traditional housing. Furthermore, it is not only the sharing of spaces and resources that can help reduce environmental impact, but also that co-housing can encourage and teach more environmentally friendly thinking within the building, which is not as easily achieved in other types of housing. This effect can then spread to other forums and inspire more people. This impact can be important, as co-housing requires a greater level of engagement from its residents and is therefore not suitable for everyone, making it difficult to achieve large environmental gains solely through co-housing. Vamstad et al. write: *"The share of building and housing communities may certainly grow somewhat, but their greatest significance for the environment and climate might be in finding solutions and showing the way for the conventional housing market." (p. 48)*

Another important point is that it is probably more a matter of housing policy measures being required to achieve co-housing on a scale large enough to reduce environmental impacts on society as a whole. One way to do this is to provide more support to those who want to build co-housing, to adapt and facilitate this type of construction. However, this requires interest and willingness among politicians to invest at both local and broader levels. The research examined by Vamstad et al. shows that the interest among politicians is divided, on one hand, there is support for a housing solution that can contribute to both social and environmental sustainability, but there is also a lack of knowledge about what is actually required to ensure that more of these types of buildings are constructed.

Scheller & Thörn (2019) write about how municipalities view co-housing and sustainability. Their research shows that municipalities emphasize social sustainability the most. When it comes to ecological sustainability, the focus is on resource use and sharing. In order to create an affordable and sustainable building over time, it is necessary to consider materials, maintenance, and construction methods. An additional cost is land prices, which is an expense that can affect the price for residents, and a cost that the state or municipality can influence by providing subsidies for this type of construction.

A company that combines sustainability with affordability is the municipally owned housing company Viskaforshem. They work long-term to unite these aspects in their properties. For the company, quality and sustainability are important issues, not only from an environmental perspective but also to create economic benefits over time. By choosing solid, durable materials, they reduce the need for maintenance, which saves both money and resources in the long run. This is especially important for a smaller company like Viskaforshem, where every investment must be sustainable from a life cycle perspective.

The company sees a clear connection between ecological and economic sustainability, as materials with longer lifespans result in lower total costs over time while also reducing environmental impact. In this way, Viskaforshem contributes to more sustainable housing development that benefits both tenants and owners. Their work demonstrates that it is possible to build and manage housing that is both affordable and environmentally responsible without compromising on quality.

When the author met Mikael Bengtsson, then CEO of the company, during a study visit, he expressed pride in the buildings he had helped create and emphasized how solid materials are cheaper in the long run, while also providing higher quality in the living environment.

STRENGTHS

+ Lower maintenance costs over time.
+ Better for the environment when you look at the LCC-analyze.
+ Better durability.
+ Better environment and air in the living areas when you use natural materials.

WEAKNESSES

- Higher initial cost, you have to have a long time-perspective.
- It can harder to get funding/loans for this kind of building.
- There can be scepticism about the idea, often everything is about affordability, in a more short time-perspective.

SURVEY

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FROM 23 PARTICIPANTS:

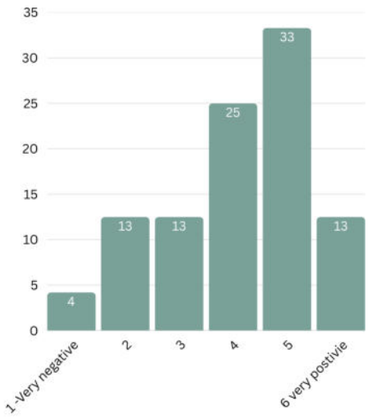
1. Are you a single mom or dad?

Mom	78.3%
Dad	17.4%
No, pregnant	4.3%

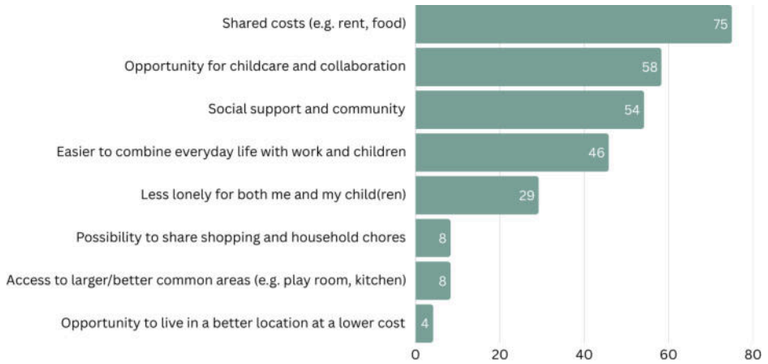
2. Do you have any experience of living in co-housing?

Yes, I live or have lived in a co-housing	17.4%
No, but I am interested	56.5%
No, and I am not interested	26.1%

3. How negative or positive are you about the idea of living in a co-housing with other single parents?



4. What advantages do you see with co-housing for single parents? *(Choose up to three)*



Interpretation Q3
There is clear support for co-housing for single parents among the respondents, with 71% being somewhat positive to strongly positive. Several place themselves in the middle of the scale, which may indicate uncertainity rather than resistance, as many have no experience of living in this type of housing.

Takeaway
Since many lack experience with co-housing, it is important to address shared spaces and different levels of privacy, for example through different zones.

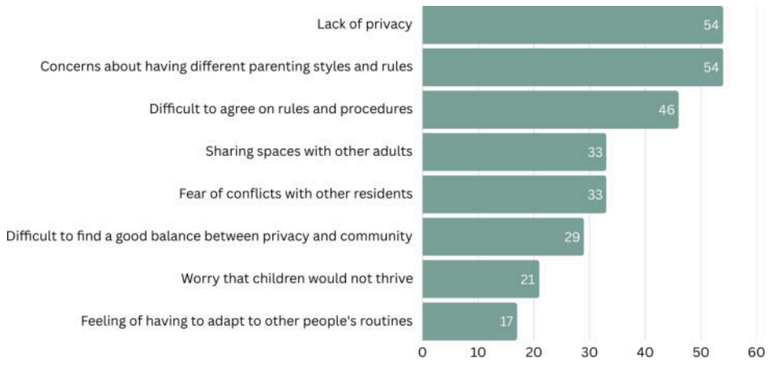
Design implication
- Flexible community, having various sizes of shared spaces, so that there are also more intimate/small spaces for those who are less comfortable in large groups.
- Clear zoning between private/semi-private and fully shared areas.

Interpretation Q4
Economy is the most important factor, followed by the possibility of cooperation and gaining a stronger sense of community.

Takeaway
- Enabling shared meals contributes to reduced costs, cooperation, and community.
- Create child-friendly shared spaces where parents can support each other.

Design implication
- Cooperation and child focus, having playrooms close to adult areas, but also child-safe zones.
- Shared meals, creating a good space for cooking and eating together.

5. What challenges or disadvantages do you see with living in a co-housing?
(Choose up to three)

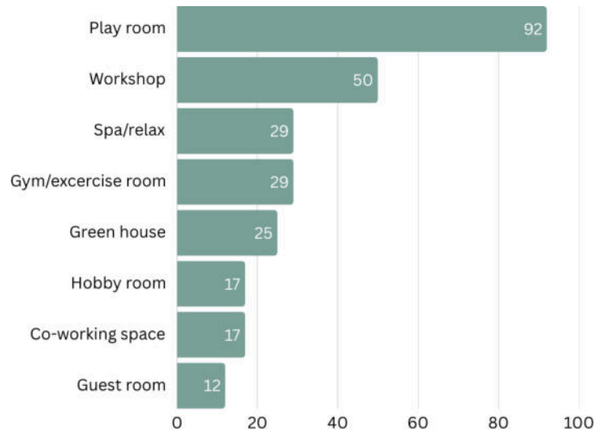


Interpretation Q5
Boundaries, privacy, and rules are concerns among the respondents.

Takeaway
It is important to create the possibility for private living within the collective. The shared spaces can have different zones, such as quiet and active zones.

Design implication
Zoning – quiet and active zones, larger more social areas and smaller semi-private yet shared ones.

6. What special features in the shared areas would you most appreciate?
(Choose up to three)



Interpretation Q6
Play and creativity are important to the respondents, these functions are perhaps also something that is often difficult to find space for in a regular apartment. Having access to them in one's own housing can improve the quality of life for both adults and children.

Takeaway
The surveyed parents want to create added value for their children by providing access to spaces for play and socializing, but they also see benefits in having access to rooms that are more oriented toward adults.

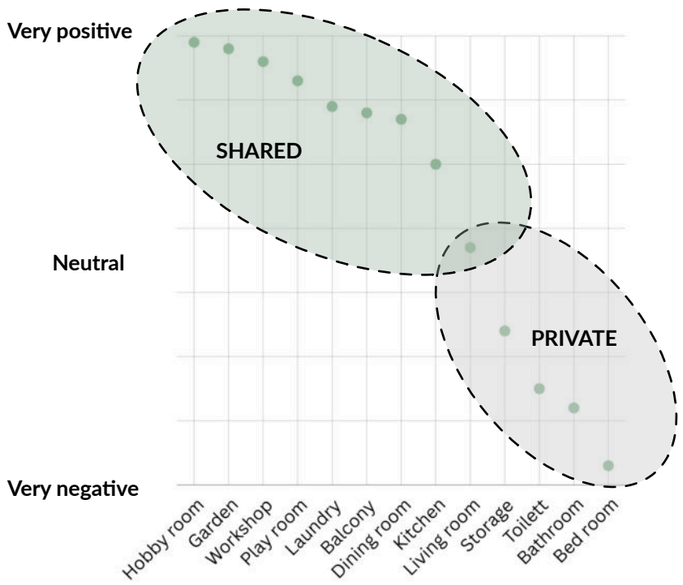
Design implication
- A playroom that encourages play, located near other shared spaces.
- Create unprogrammed, flexible rooms that residents can choose how to use, depending on their preferences, such as a crafts room or art studio.
- Create spaces for adults as well, such as a gym, spa/relaxation area, or greenhouse.

7. How do you feel about sharing the following spaces in a co-housing?

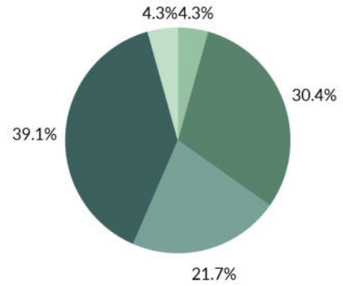
Interpretation Q7
People are positive about sharing non-private spaces such as play areas, hobby rooms, workshops, and gardens, but want intimate functions to remain private, such as bedrooms, toilets, and showers.

Takeaway
To clarify how the building's various functions should be divided between private and shared, the results were compiled into a diagram, and the spaces were categorized as shared or private based on that.

Design implication
- Share functions that are perceived as neutral or practical.

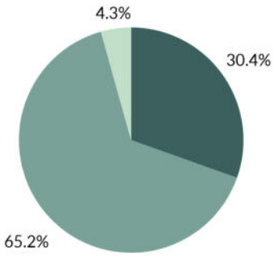


8. If there is a large shared kitchen and dining room, how big would your private kitchen need to be?



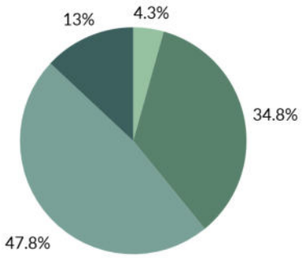
- No private kitchen is needed, the shared one is enough
- A small kitchenette (e.g. sink, hotplate, small fridge) is sufficient.
- A compact kitchen with limited equipment (e.g. two hotplates, small oven, fridge/freezer)
- A fully equipped kitchen but smaller than standard (e.g. fewer cabinets, less work surface)
- A full-sized kitchen, regardless of shared options

9. How would you divide living space between private and shared spaces?



- Larger private space, minimal common areas (e.g. a standard apartment without communal spaces)
- Smaller private space, but access to well-equipped common areas (e.g. a smaller apartment but with shared kitchen, living room and other functions)
- Very small private space, but extensive common areas (e.g. small private rooms but with large shared areas for cooking, socializing, laundry, etc.)fewer cabinets, less work surface)

10. If you could reduce your private living space and instead have larger shared spaces, how much private space would you be willing to give up? *(Choose one option, based on a standard two bedroom apartment, approximately 75 sqm)*



- Retains 75 sqm, no common areas
- Reduces to 65 sqm, gains access to 50 sqm of common areas
- Reduces to 50 sqm, gains access to 100 sqm of common areas
- Reduces to 40 sqm, gains access to 200 sq m of common areas

Interpretation Q8-10
The respondents wants a kitchen, even if there is a shared one, but a smaller kitchen than usual is acceptable. They are also positive about having less private space in order to have access to shared spaces as well.

Takeaway
A kitchen must be present, but it doesn't need to be as large as a standard kitchen. Reducing the size of kitchens and living rooms can encourage residents to use the shared spaces, while still providing room to relax in their home.

Design implications
- Functional and flexible shared spaces.
- Reduced kitchen and living room sizes

- The design proposals apartment sizes:
"sqm (average area in Sweden)"
Two rooms and kitchen: 30-45 sqm (52 sqm)
Three rooms and kitchen: 45-65 sqm (74 sqm)
Four rooms and kitchen: 65-85 sqm (94 sqm)
Five rooms and kitchen: 85-100 sqm (116 sqm)

STUDY TRIP 1 - UNDER SAMMA TAK

Place: Högsbo, Gothenburg
Architects: Helena Westholm
FERRUM ARKITEKTER AB
Year: 2020

In 2009, the association Undersammatak (UST) was formed by seven people who all wanted to live in a co-housing community. They began working to make their dream a reality, and in 2014 they received a land reservation. The building that was constructed is an environmentally certified building, "Miljöbyggnad guld", which means that great care was taken during construction to create a sustainable structure.

The building has 5 floors plus a basement and consists of 59 rental apartments (1–5 rooms and kitchen) It is owned by Trollängen Bostad AB. Everyone living in the building must be a member of UST and agree to its core values.. The shared spaces are located on the entrance level and on the top floor, where there is a communal rooftop terrace and a sunroom.

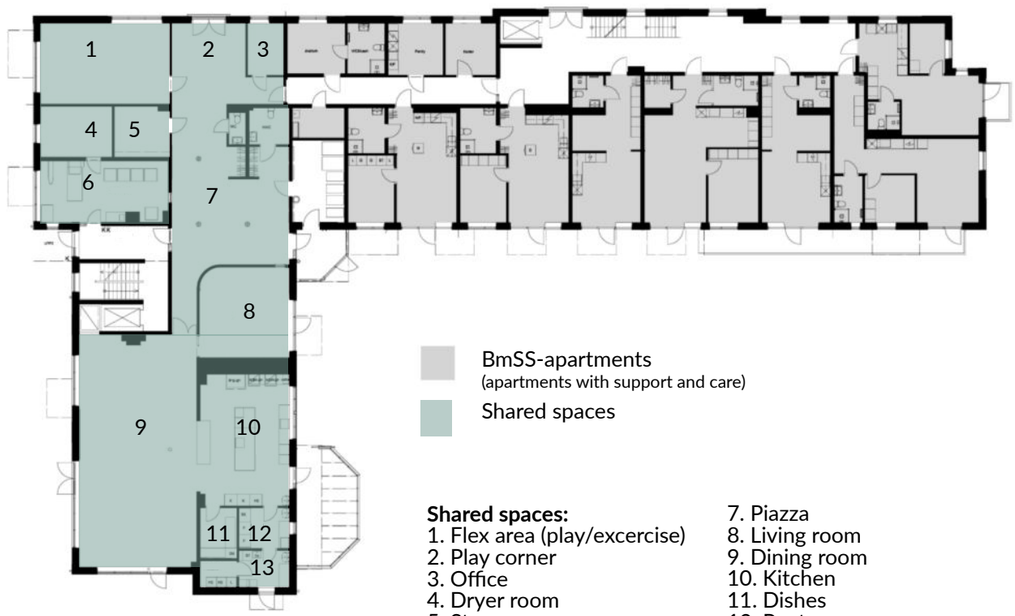


Figure 1 - Ground floor plan

There are two 5-room apartments intended as a “collective within the collective” (co-living). They are designed to be shared by 4–5 people. Those residents have private bedrooms but share a living room, kitchen, and two bathrooms. They also have access to all the shared areas within the building.

Figure 2 - Co-living floor plan

STUDY VISIT

During the study visit, several insights were gained through conversations with a resident about how the building is used. It was mentioned that some of the shared spaces, particularly the piazza and the living room, are not used to the extent that was expected during the planning of the building. One reason mentioned was that the living room feels somewhat secluded, as it is not possible to see from the corridor whether someone is inside, which may reduce spontaneous use. The size of the private living rooms was also brought up as a possible factor, as they offer space for socializing within the individual apartments. Most apartments have private balconies, but the interviewed resident lived in a top-floor apartment without a balcony and did not see this as a disadvantage, as the shared rooftop terraces are used frequently during the summer. Windows from the corridor into the laundry room were perceived as a positive feature, as they contributed to a less enclosed and more social atmosphere. The shared kitchen was described as well-designed and appreciated, both in terms of layout and functionality.

REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS FROM THE VISIT:

– The placement and design of shared spaces, such as living rooms, play a important role in how much they are actually used. Visibility and accessibility promotes spontaneous use.
– The planning of the shared kitchen is important for creating functionality when cooking for several people. A well-thought-out layout facilitates use and collaboration.
– Including housing units with varying degrees of sharing, such as “co-living within the co-housing,” can enable different levels of community and privacy within the same building.

STUDY TRIP 2 - KOLLEKTIVHUSET KUPAN

Place: Älvsjö, Stockholm
Architects: Kerstin Gåsste
Year: 1986

The co-housing project Kupan is one of Sweden's oldest co-housing communities. It was completed in 1986 and consists of two five-story buildings with a total of 52 apartments, consisting of two-, three-, and four-room units. Around 70 adults and 40 children live in Kupan. The shared spaces include a dining room, kitchen, gym, sauna, playroom, painting studio, gymnastics room, 2 living rooms, ceramics workshop, and rooftop terraces with gardening opportunities.

The collective is based on community and participation, the residents are jointly responsible for various activities and the maintenance of shared spaces. They are offering communal dinners every weekday, except during holidays, and several activities for the people living there. It has a relatively large proportion of children, with several single parents, which made it especially relevant for a study visit.

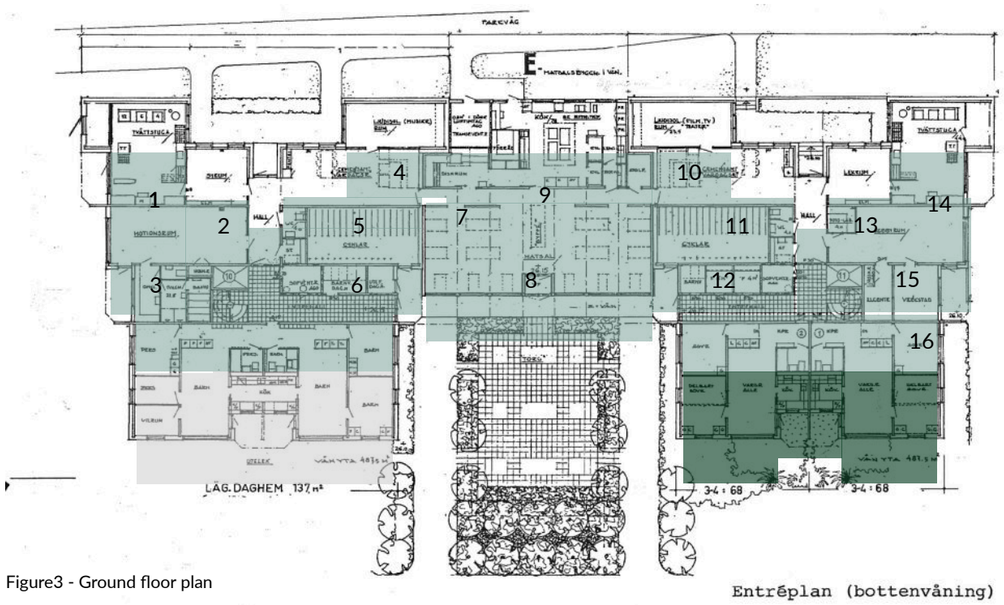


Figure3 - Ground floor plan

Shared spaces:
1. Laundry
2. Gym
3. Play/excercise
4. Living room for youths
5. Living room with play area
6. Bike storage
7. Dishes
8. Dining room
9. Kitchen
10. Office
11. Living room for adults
12. Bike storage
13. Hobby room
14. Laundry
15. Work shop
16. Work shop

Study visit
In conversations with people living in the building, several opinions were raised. Those who were spoken to were all satisfied with the housing, although some thought certain things could be improved or changed. An architect living in the building felt that the flow in the house might not always be the best and that some spaces might need to be redesigned. He also pointed out that the building blocks which have facades facing each other, allow too much visibility into one another's apartments. This might be more acceptable in a different apartment building, where you don't end up meeting the neighbor later during dinner. Other residents in the building didn't see it as a problem or something they had thought about. There was also opportunityies to speak with several single parents in the building, all of whom had a positive view of living in co-housing as a single parent. The children had many playmates, and people helped each other in a way that is different from living in a regular housing setup.

Interview
An interview was conducted with an architect living in the building, who is also a single mother of two children, thus providing insights from multiple perspectives. Several thoughts were shared regarding the pros and cons of Kupan. She describes that the social support is a major advantage, especially for single parents. Co-housing makes it possible to help each other with picking up and dropping off children, which is very helpful in daily life. Additionally, the children have access to more adult relationships, which allows them to develop their social skills. The collective community proved to be extra important during periods of illness, such as during the COVID pandemic, when support from other residents made daily life easier. If one is alone during holidays, there is an opportunity to celebrate with others, creating a meaningful community that can counteract isolation and exclusion. At the same time, she mentions that there are also challenges, not all people function well together, and this applies to children as well, who don't necessarily want to play all the time, or with all the children. When it comes to the target group in co-housing, she sees the value in a mixed housing setup, rather than one solely for single parents. This is because it can be difficult for that specific group to always have the energy or time to help each other, while residents with older children or no children may have more time to contribute to community and support.

From a design perspective, she emphasizes the importance of shared spaces that enable social interaction without disturbing others, as well as the need to create different zones, both active and quiet. A survey conducted among the residents by Kupan's board examines opinions on the different shared spaces and how they are actually used. Most are satisfied with the shared spaces in the building. A popular space in Kupan is a flexible gymnastic room that is frequently used by both children and adults. Other spaces may not be used by all residents but are still considered important for those who do use them. When it comes to co-housing as a living arrangement, she believes that prejudices and a negative image often hinder development. More and innovative marketing is needed to highlight the advantages of this living model. From the builders' perspective, she believes that uncertainty about demand is an obstacle. It is also mentioned that although the monthly fee in their housing association may be somewhat higher than for similar apartments that are not co-housing, the total living costs are reduced through sharing, such as food, tools, and equipment.

REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS FROM THE VISIT AND THE INTERVIEW:

- It is important to design shared spaces that facilitate social interaction and support, such as communal dinners and activities. This also helps combat isolation.
- Varied shared spaces to meet different needs, such as a gymnasium that can be used in many different ways by various groups.
- Different zones for both active and quiet activities, allowing residents to choose spaces based on their needs.
- Have a mixed housing setup where single parents live alongside other groups. This can help create a larger social context.
- Balance between shared and private spaces, considering privacy and visibility in the design.

REFERENCE PROJECT - ICH-DU-WIR+WOHNEN

Place: Vienna, Austria
Architects: TREBERSPURG & PARTNER ARCHITEKTEN
Year: 2016

CO-HOUSING: The building at Viehtriftgasse 3 is a four-story collective housing project that offers several forms of collective housing, including units that can be shared by two single parents placed on the ground floor. They are the ones that will be analyzed. The building's theme is *"Ich, Du, Wir"*, meaning that some things are shared within the unit, while others are shared with everyone living in the building.

Figure 4 - Facade

PRIVATE "ICH": The private parts of the apartments consist of 1 big and 1 small bedroom and some storage.

SHARED "DU": The shared spaces within the apartment consist of the kitchen, living room, toilet, bathroom, and hallway.

SHARED, "WIR: The areas shared by all residents in the building include a party room, workshop, studio, gym, game/playroom, lounge, and rooftop terrace.

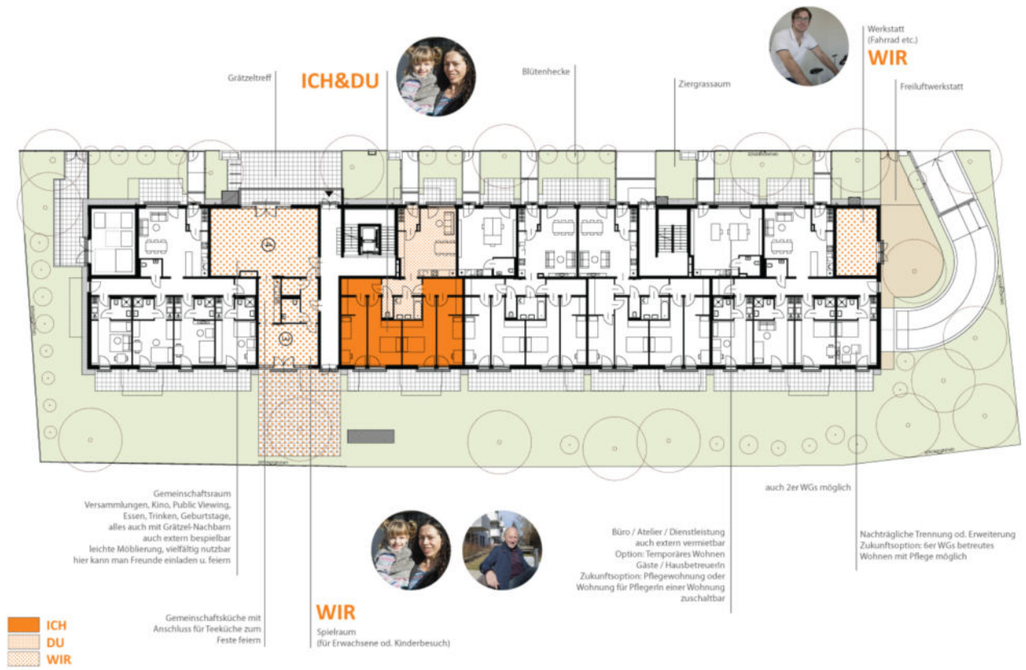


Figure 5 - Ground floor plan

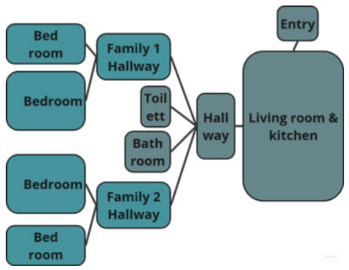
Figure 6 - Ground floor plan with added legend.

ICH
DU
WIR

SHARED UNIT

PLAN & DIAGRAM

ICH DU WIR



STRENGTHS

+ The shared parts of the building are placed on the front side of the building, the private areas on the back, which creates more privacy.
+ The planning of the private units are done in a way that they get a little hallway when they get in to their rooms, it gives a litte more privacy.
+ The whole building focuses on community for different kinds of people.
+ Some flexability regarding furniturings of the private spaces.
+ Laundry on the top floor, where also more of the "Wir"-areas are placed.

WEAKNESSES

- No shared kitchen and dining room in the building, it is more like smaller collectives in the same building
- There is not a lot of storage.
- The corridor to the private units is probably quite dark
- No private toilet/bathroom
- Only smaller apartments

REFERENCE PROJECT - COMMUNE OF POISSY

Place: Paris, France
Architects: CUTWORK STUDIO
Year: 2023

The Commune of Poissy is the first building in France dedicated to single parents and their children. The Commune was born from the observation that lifestyles and times had changed, but housing had not followed, new ways of living was needed.

Figure 7 - Facade

The building has 3 floors and the spaces are divided into private and shared spaces. It is built for 13 families and they have 2 sizes of private units, with 2 or 3 rooms. Each have bedrooms, bathroom and a kitchenette, the shared spaces include a large kitchen, home cinema, game room and garden.

Since there is not much information available about the specific building, so instead, the concept of “Commune” created by the architecture firm Cutwork Studio is examined.

It all started with a concept, an idea of weaving together two worlds, one for children and one for adults. The idea was to have smart and compact private dwellings combined with both playfully hidden and open shared spaces. They also wanted to combine this with a support system and affordability. This is how "Commune - coliving for single-parent families" was created.

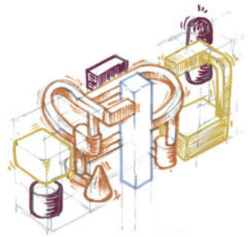


Figure 8 - Early concept

Fördelning av ytor i volym:

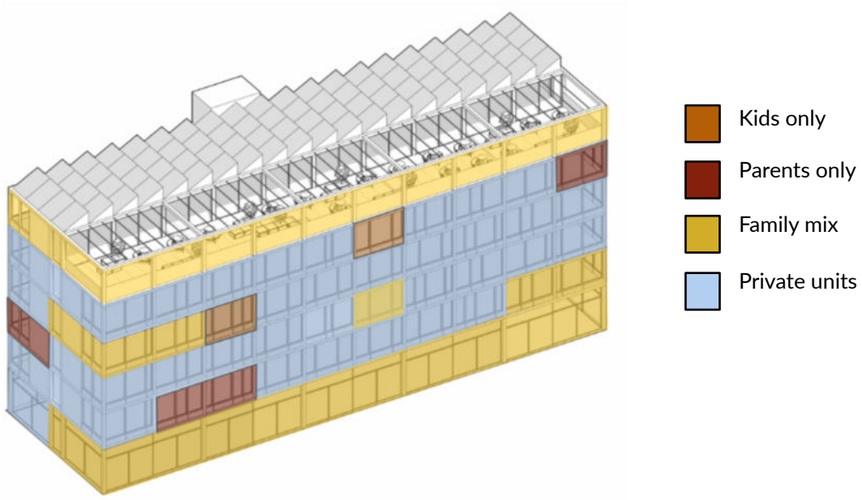


Figure 9 - Volume diagram

SHARED AREAS:

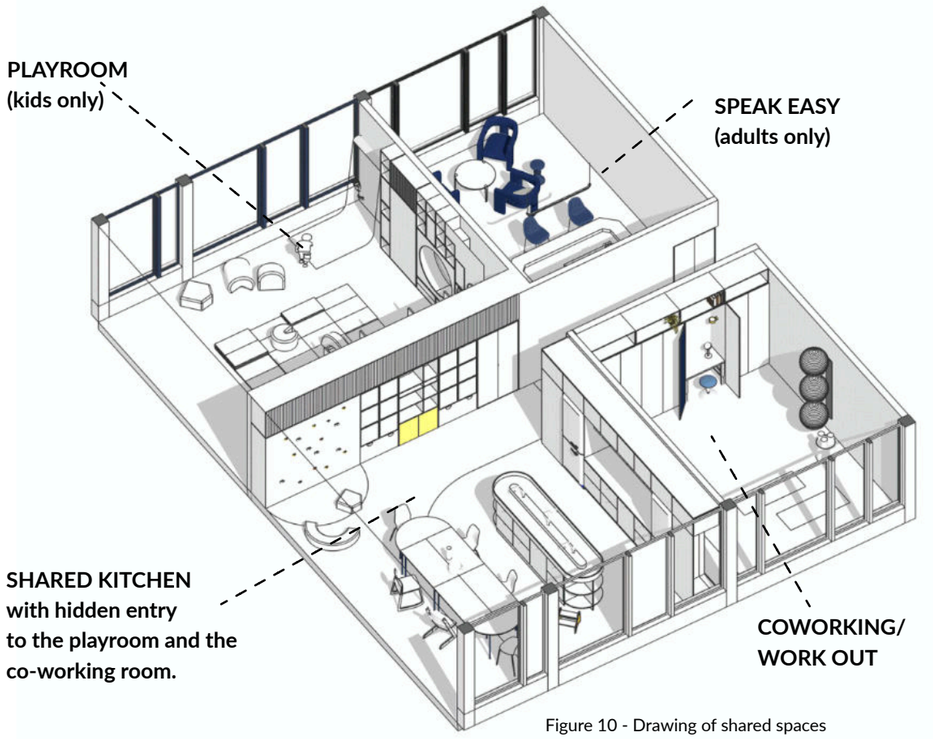


Figure 10 - Drawing of shared spaces

The shared functions have different uses and user groups, several areas are intended only for adults or only for children. There are many hidden entrances to and connections between the different areas, such as a low cabinet hatch that functions as an entrance to the playroom from the kitchen, or a refrigerator door that is a door to the coworking space from the kitchen.

Figure 11- Shared kitchen with hidden entry to playroom

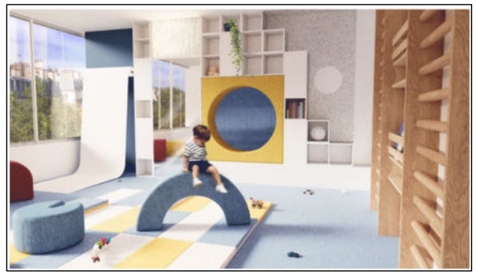


Figure 12 - Playroom with hidden entry to the adult only-room

PRIVATE APARTMENTS:

Cutwork has created a modular system with compact, scalable apartments that can be combined in many different ways depending on needs. They use movable partitions and foldable or convertible furniture to optimize space and usability.They work a lot with colors and choose to use common materials and color palettes to reduce the feeling of “mine and yours,” and to increase the sense of community in the building. The apartments may not meet swedish requirements when it comes to daylight, but it can be useful to see how they have worked with the adaptable, compact and modular thinking.

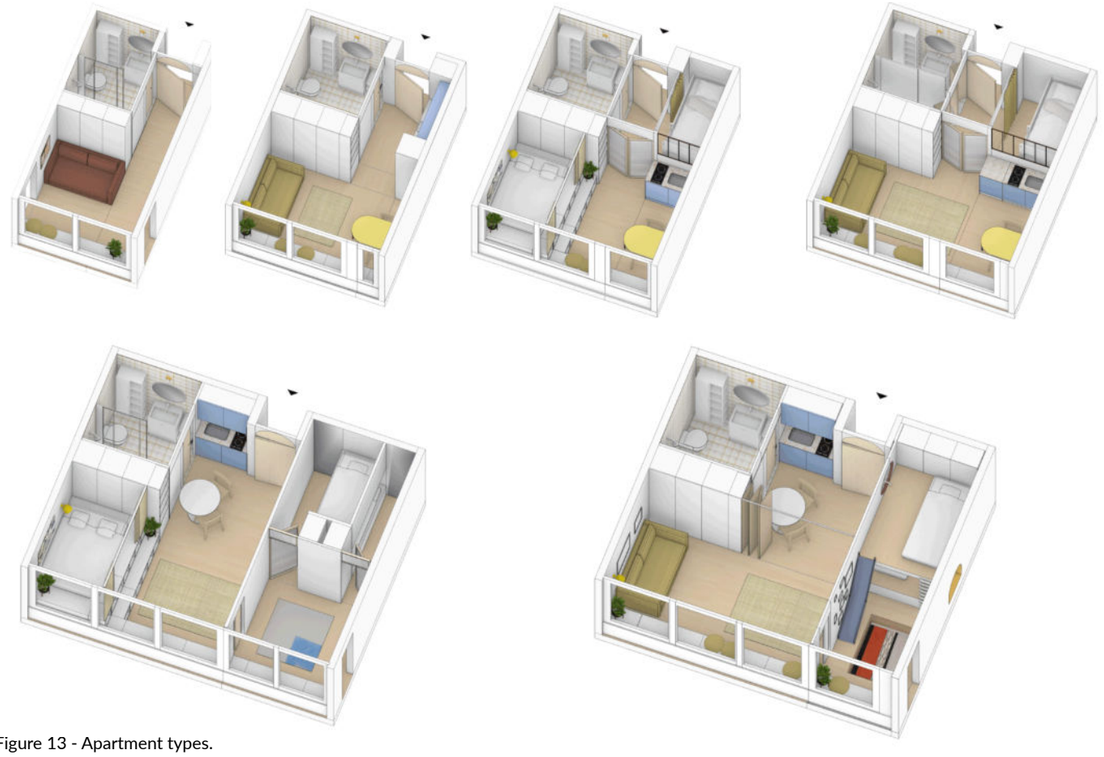


Figure 13 - Apartment types.

TAKEAWAYS REFERENCE PROJECTS

ICH-DU-WIR+WOHNEN

- To include different types of housing in the building, not only for single parents. This creates a more varied social network and can benefit many.

- To make part of the building a “co-living within the co-housing,” but not only have that type of housing. It can be good to have as an option for those who do not have as great need for fully private space.

COMMUNE OF POISSY

- To mix private and shared spaces on the floors, so that the shared areas are not only on one level.

- To have areas that are more for children, more for adults, and mixed spaces. To create different zones, more active and more quiet ones.

- The modular design thinking, to design the apartments in a square shape, which makes it easier to combine them in different ways, depending on the need for housing.

SITE ANALYSIS

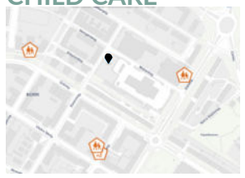
The intended site is located just outside Eskilstuna city center, about 110 kilometers west of Stockholm. The area has undergone significant expansion in recent years. The site itself is currently used as a large fenced parking lot, adjacent to a car wash and a gas station. The surrounding area consists mainly of multi-family houses, several of which were built in the 1940s and 1950s, combined with the newly built area to the northwest of the site.

ESKILSTUNA

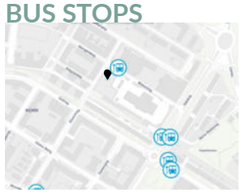
ELEONORAGATAN

Size of Eskilstuna
1100 km²
Residents - 107 468
Residents/km² - 97,8/km²

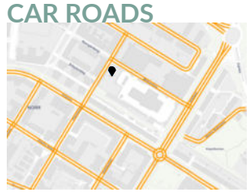
SCHOOLS & CHILD CARE



BUS STOPS



CAR ROADS



BIKE & WALKING ROADS

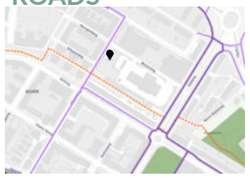
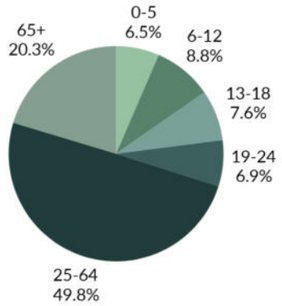


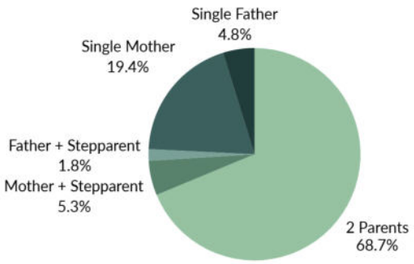
Figure 14 - Maps showing the site.

STATISTICS

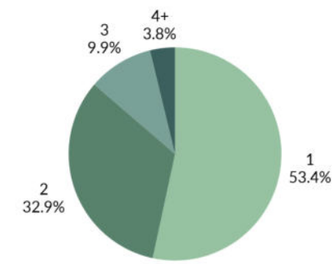
Age groups in Eskilstuna



Children 0-17 years - 23 097
Living situation for children:



Single Families: 3 383
Family sizes - children 0-17:



Unemployment
Eskilstuna/Sweden
11,2/6,8%

Average income
Eskilstuna/Sweden
339 200 /*388 300*

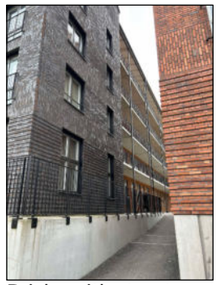
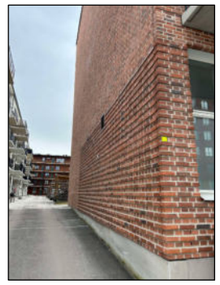
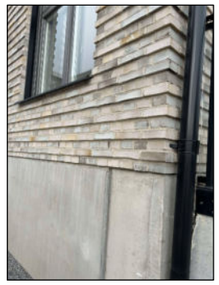
Residents with an immigrant background
Eskilstuna/Sweden
36.7/27.2%

Foreign-born residents
Eskilstuna/Sweden
27/21%

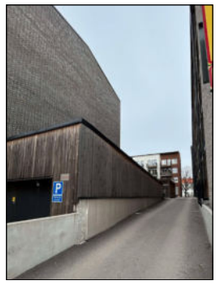
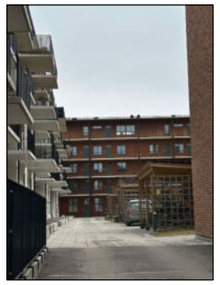
Housing types
Eskilstuna/Sweden

Single-family:
36/42%
Multi-family:
64/50%

SITE ANALYSIS - MATERIALS

Bricks with structure.

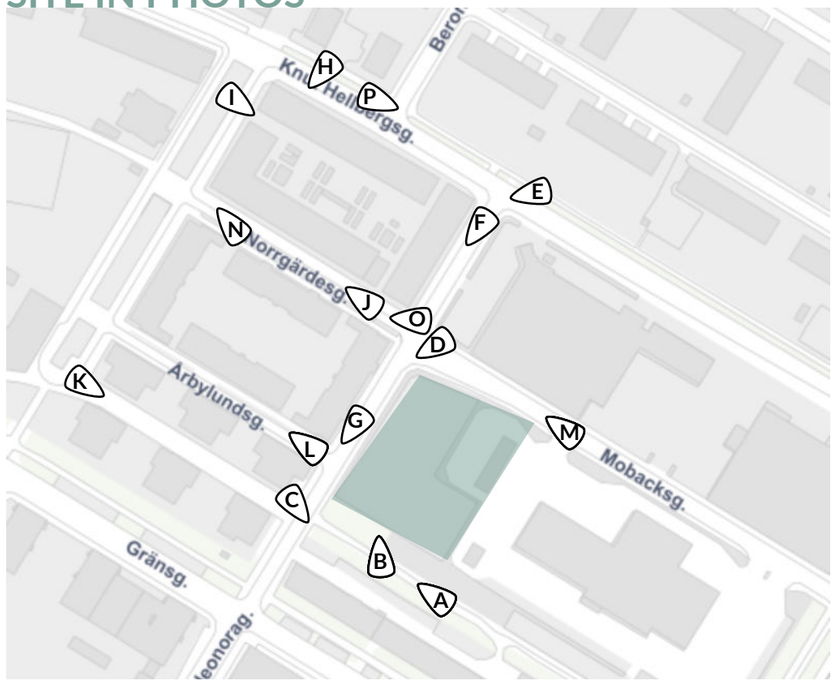



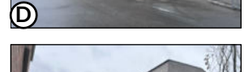
Bricks and wood.



Bricks, plaster & different colors.

SITE IN PHOTOS






DISTANCES FROM SITE

SHOOLS		RESTAURANTS		STORES		HEALTH & RECREATION	
Preschool	200m	Café	300m	Service store	250m	Health center	700m
Preschool	300m	Sushi	300m	Gas station	250m	Gym	450m
Preschool	700m	Pizza	300m	Food store	700m	Yoga studio	210m
School 0-6	1000m	Pizza	450m	Food store	950m	Swimming hall	750m
School 7-9	550m	Pizza	650m	City center	1000m	City park	400m
School 0-9	650m	Thai	450m			Church park	450m
						Play ground	450m
						Play ground	950m

03. DESIGN PROPOSAL

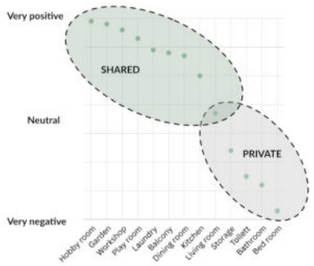
Therese Alégroth

DESIGN STRATEGIES

After the research phase, there were many insights and ideas to organize. All material was analyzed and sorted into categories and keywords to clarify patterns, themes, and possible design strategies. This review made it possible to identify the needs of single parents and translate them into concrete strategies. The result of the analysis formed the basis for the building program and the development of the final design proposal.

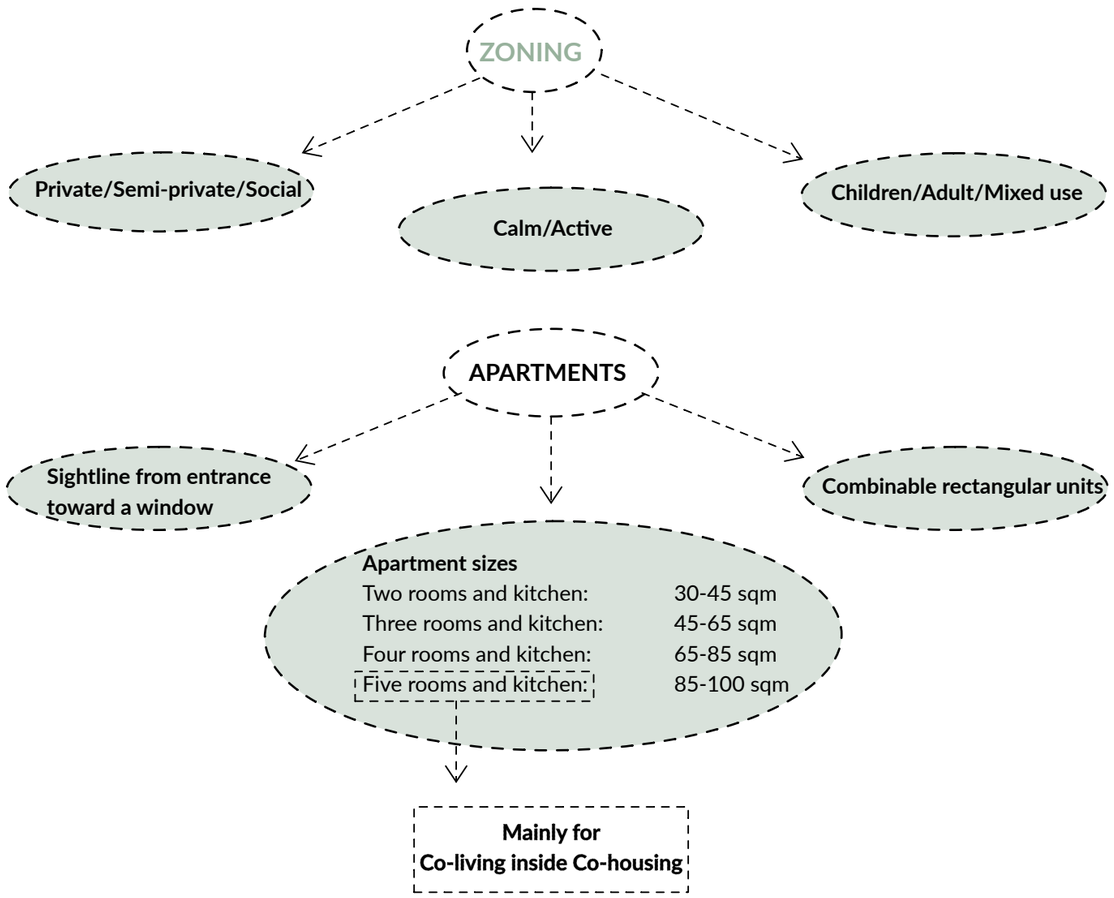
SHARED SPACES

Key words
- Child-friendly
- Visability
- Accessibility
- Mixed sizes
- Flexible areas



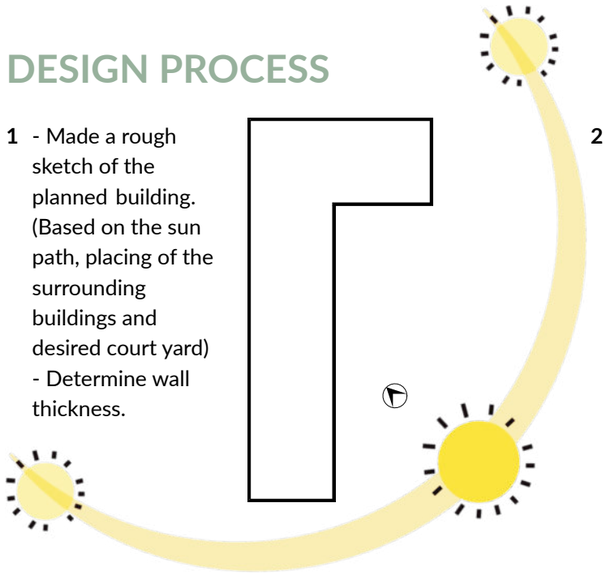
Shared or private spaces

Shared	Private & Shared	Private:
Dining room	Kitchen	Storage
Balcony	Living room	Toilett
Laundry		Bathroom
Play room		Bed room
Work shop		
Garden		

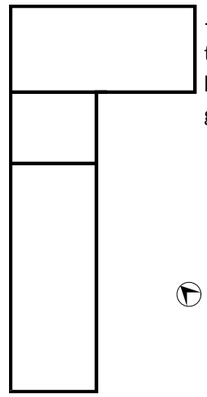


DESIGN PROCESS

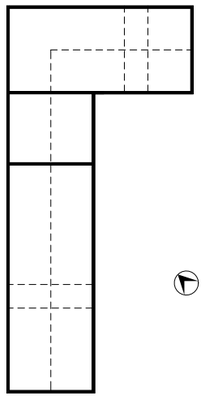
1 - Made a rough sketch of the planned building. (Based on the sun path, placing of the surrounding buildings and desired court yard)
- Determine wall thickness.



2 - The building is divided into two taller volumes connected by a lower volume on the ground floor.

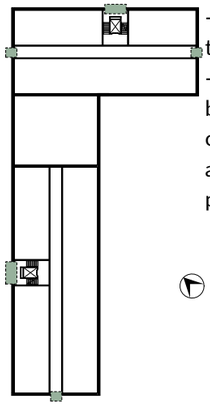


3



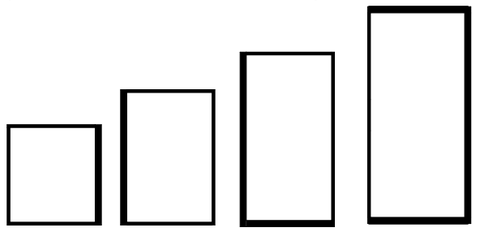
-The building's circulation area is placed in the center to maximize window surface for the rooms.
- Entrances with openings on two sides are placed.
- A rough sketch of the ground floor areas is made.

4



- Stairwells are placed along the facade.
- Openings are created to bring light into the building's corridors, as the corridors are also intended to function as potential social spaces.

5
- To determine the depth of the apartments, the two-meter corridor is subtracted and the remaining measurement is divided by two so that all apartments have the same depth.
- The apartments are designed with rectangular shapes so they can be combined in various ways.



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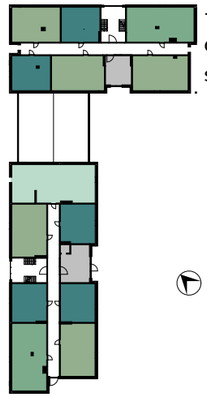
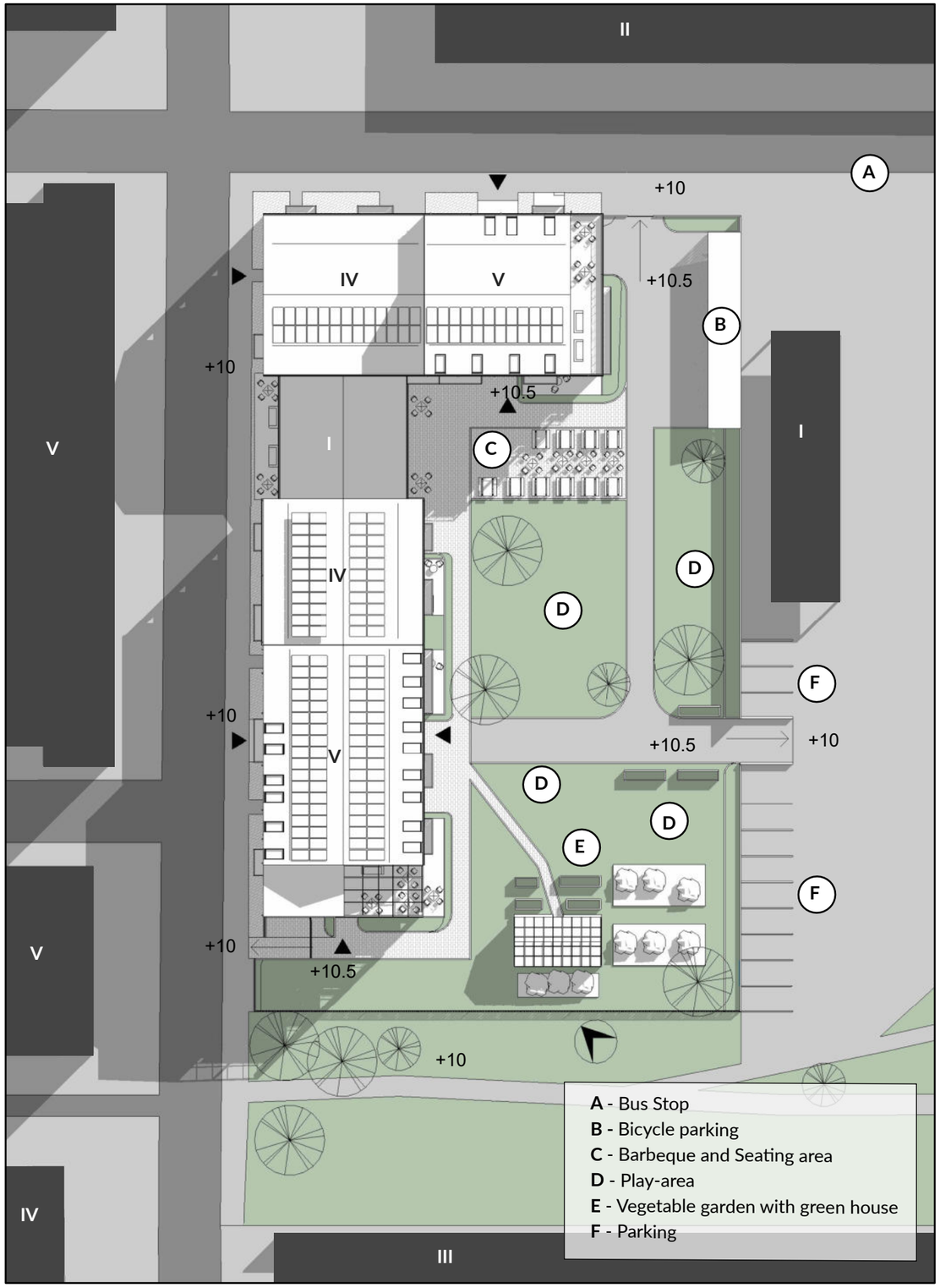


- The apartments are combined to form the final shape of the building.

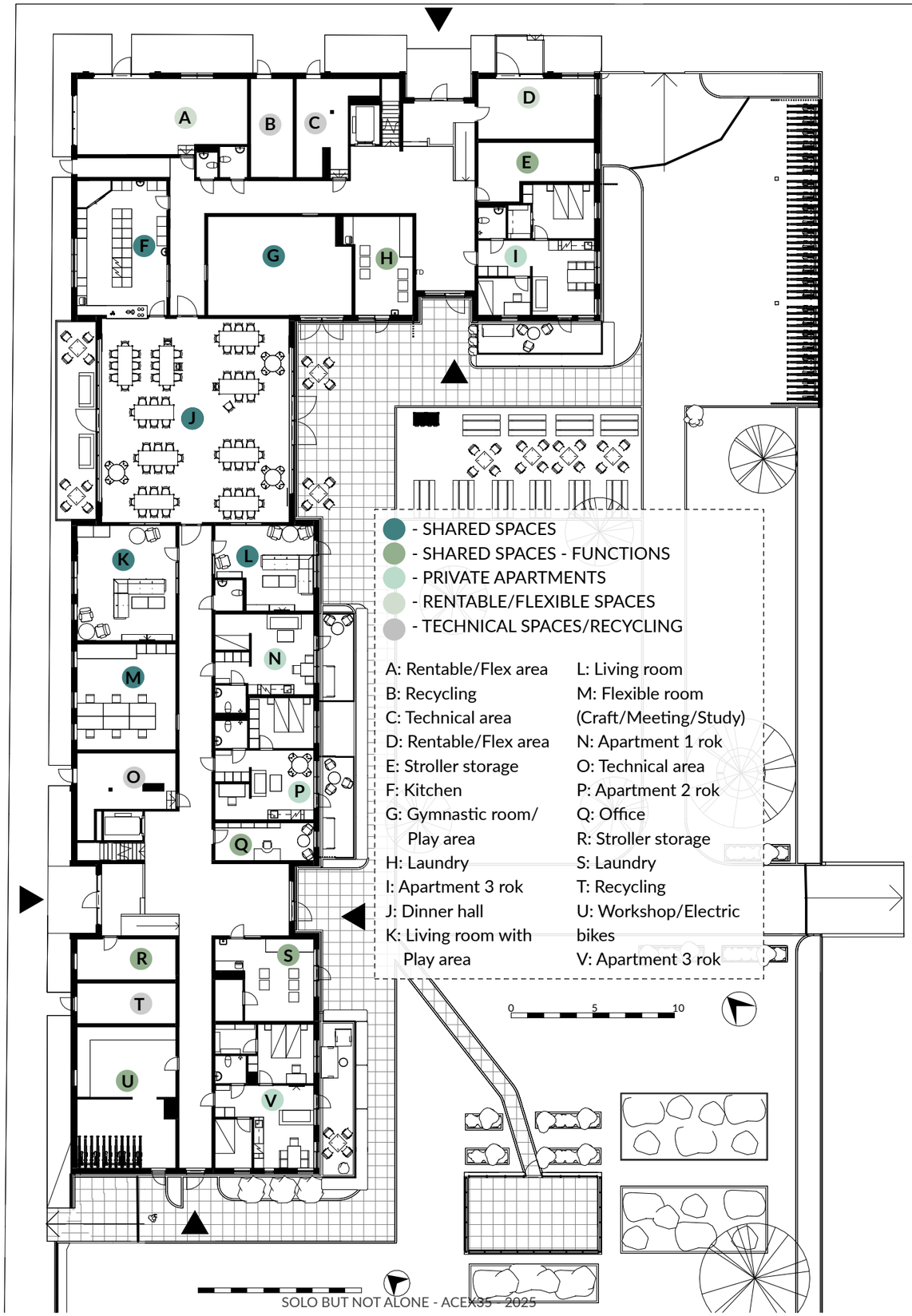
SITEPLAN - 1:500



The design proposal is situated on a former parking lot that is now being activated with a new co-housing project. Two taller volumes are connected by a lower section at the entrance level, creating a sheltered courtyard with spaces for community and activity. The entire courtyard is elevated from the street, a strategy used by several surrounding buildings to establish a clear zone around the house without closing off the surroundings. Since the plot is located in the southeast, it receives sunlight for most of the day.

Along the southeastern edge of the plot, there are parking spaces where residents can also have a carpool, further promoting sharing and environmental benefits. The site also includes a large covered bicycle parking area.

ENTRANCE FLOOR - 1:300

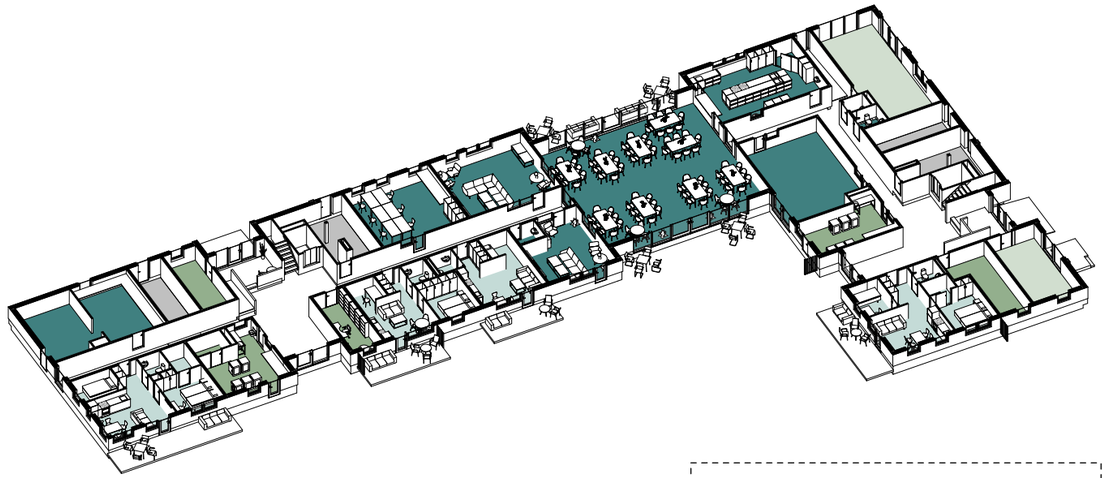


The entrance floor is the heart of the building, where most of the shared spaces are located, although there are also two smaller flexible areas placed on each floor. The building consists of two taller volumes, connected by the lower dining hall. When entering through one of the entrances near the two stairwells, you encounter a small level difference, designed to raise the building's functions and courtyard slightly above street level. However, the recycling and technical rooms are accessible from street level. Around the stairwells are functions such as laundry rooms and stroller storage. Both laundry rooms have entrances and windows facing the corridor, as well as direct access to the courtyard to easily shake off or hang laundry if needed.

The most social areas are not directly connected to the stairwells, allowing residents to choose how social they wish to be. Most of the shared social spaces are located near the dining hall, which is used not only for dinners but also as a social area. Most shared spaces have windows facing both the outside and the corridor, to encourage more social interaction while also allowing light into the corridor. Adjacent to the dining hall are two living rooms, one geared more towards adults, and the other featuring a designated play area. On the opposite side of the dining hall is a large, well-equipped kitchen that opens towards the dining space. In the kitchen, the building's residents collaborate to prepare meals for those who wish to dine together. Opposite the kitchen is a large sports/playroom, offering space for children to play and run, though it can of course also be used by the adults in the building.

The building has two rentable spaces, which can also be used by the residents if needed, as they are accessible from both the outside near the bus stop and from the inside.

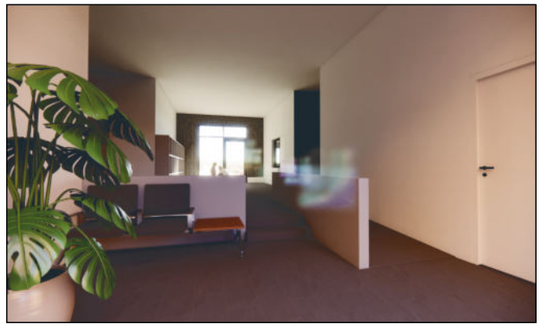
On the entrance floor, there are also four apartments of varying sizes, though these are not specifically designed with single-parent families as the focus group. The building's spacious courtyard is slightly elevated from the street level to create a more private feeling, while still remaining open outward. The courtyard includes areas for outdoor dining and barbecues, several play areas, and space for gardening, both in and outside the greenhouse.



ENTRANCE FLOOR

Number of apartments: 4
Total area for apartments: 182,4 sqm
Shared spaces area: 416,3 sqm
Shared functions area: 102,2 sqm
Rentable/flexible area: 72,8 sqm
Technical/recycling area: 75,3 sqm

ENTRANCE FLOOR - ILLUSTRATIONS

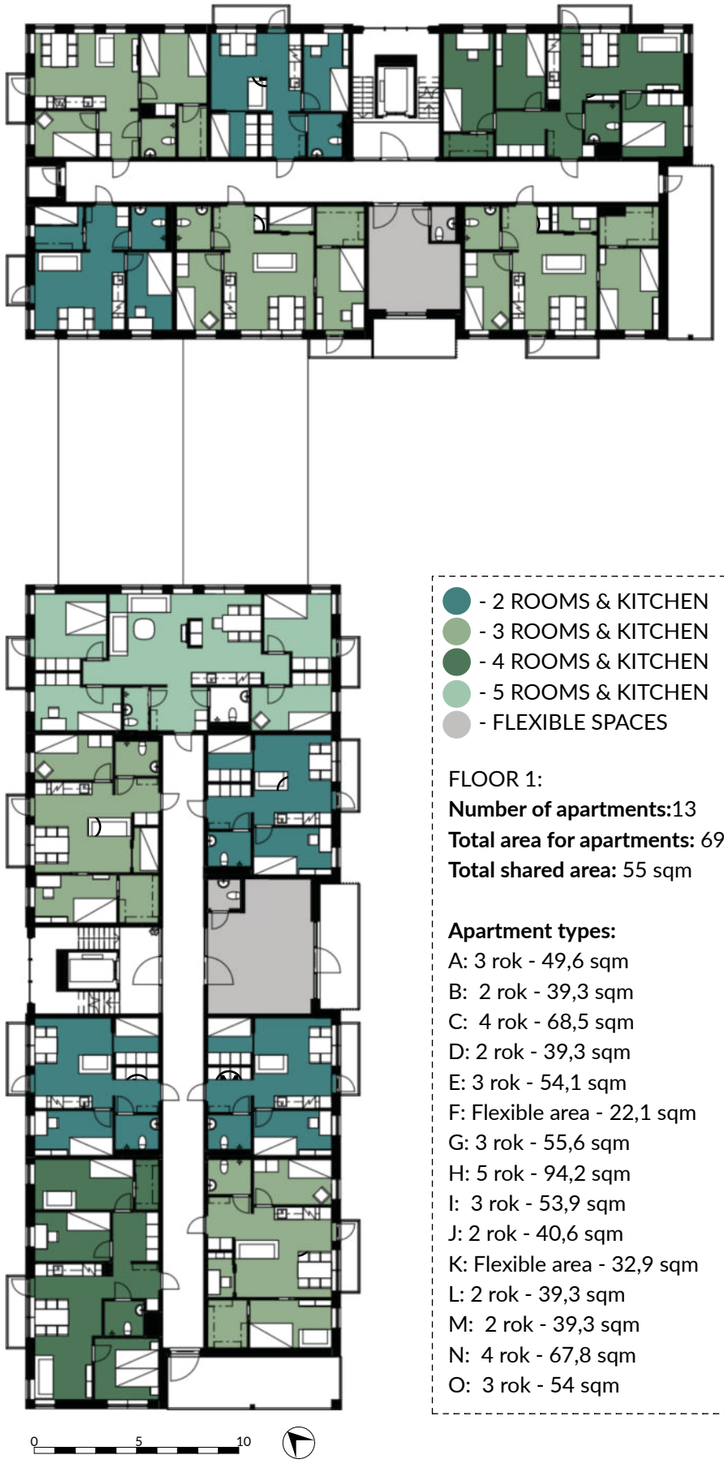


ILLUSTRATIONS - Entry

ILLUSTRATIONS - Living rooms

ILLUSTRATIONS - Dining hall

FLOOR PLAN 1 - 1:300
AIMED AT SINGLE PARENTS



- 2 ROOMS & KITCHEN
- 3 ROOMS & KITCHEN
- 4 ROOMS & KITCHEN
- 5 ROOMS & KITCHEN
- FLEXIBLE SPACES

FLOOR 1:
Number of apartments:13
Total area for apartments: 695,9 sqm
Total shared area: 55 sqm

Apartment types:
A: 3 rok - 49,6 sqm
B: 2 rok - 39,3 sqm
C: 4 rok - 68,5 sqm
D: 2 rok - 39,3 sqm
E: 3 rok - 54,1 sqm
F: Flexible area - 22,1 sqm
G: 3 rok - 55,6 sqm
H: 5 rok - 94,2 sqm
I: 3 rok - 53,9 sqm
J: 2 rok - 40,6 sqm
K: Flexible area - 32,9 sqm
L: 2 rok - 39,3 sqm
M: 2 rok - 39,3 sqm
N: 4 rok - 67,8 sqm
O: 3 rok - 54 sqm

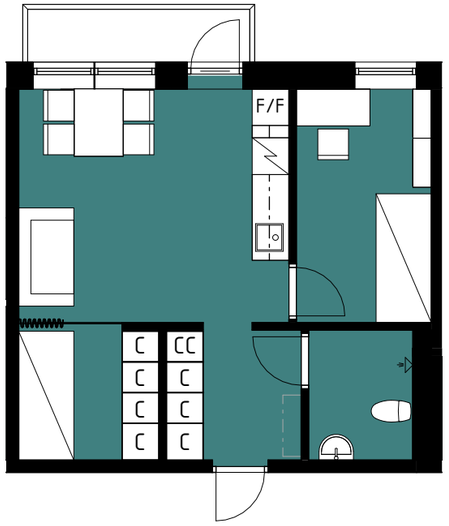
The first floor is designed for single parents, with smaller bedrooms than usual, as the rooms are not intended for a couple. However, apartments larger than 55 sqm have rooms that can accommodate a double bed, in order to meet the recommendations. When entering from the stairwell, residents are greeted by natural light and a shared, flexible space that can be used according to the residents' needs and wishes. There is also access to a common balcony. With large windows both in the stairwell and in the shared area, light enters the corridor from two directions, and at the southeastern end of the corridor, additional light comes in through another shared balcony.

One feature present in all apartments is a clear sightline towards a window when entering the apartment. The apartments have ventilation balconies, as balconies were highlighted in the survey conducted during the research phase as something many residents were positive about sharing. Since the possibility to open up to the outdoors still adds quality to the living environment, balconies were stillincluded, though in a very scaled-down form.

ILLUSTRATION- View from the flexible shared area to the stairwell

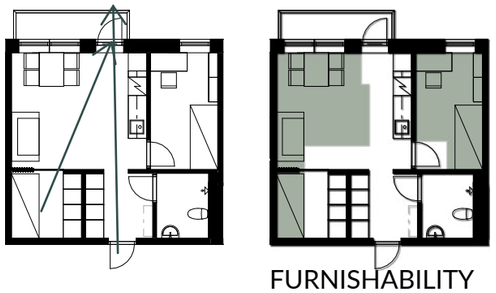
ILLUSTRATION- View from the stairwell to a shared space and balcony

APARTMENT 2A - SINGLE-SIDED FACADE
TWO ROOMS AND KITCHEN - 39,3 sqm



The layout is compact yet functional, with a bedroom for the child and a sleeping alcove with storage for the parent. The open floor plan provides a small social area, although most social interaction is likely to take place in the shared spaces of the building. Additional storage is available on the fourth floor if needed.

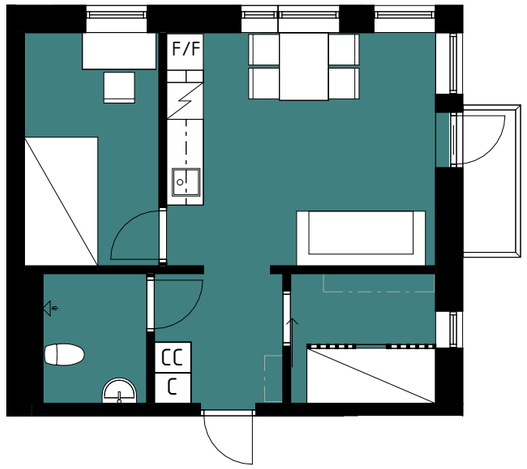
AXIALITY/SIGHTLINES/FURNISHABILITY



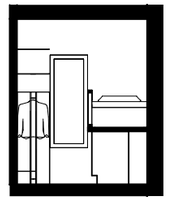
FURNISHABILITY
48.1%

ILLUSTRATION - APARTMENT 2A

APARTMENT 2B - CORNER APARTMENT
TWO ROOMS AND KITCHEN - 39,3 sqm

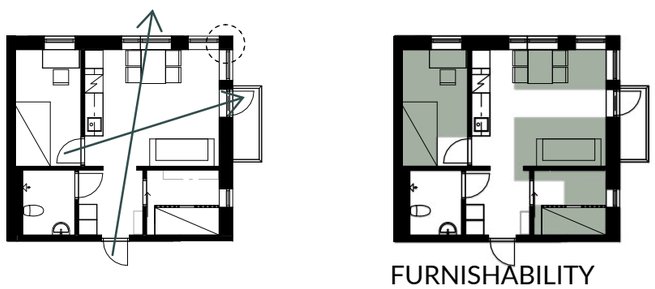


The layout is compact yet functional, with one bedroom and a 5 sqm walk-in closet with a window. The open floor plan and corner window create a bright space for social interaction, although most socializing will likely take place in the building's shared areas. The walk-in closet can be used as a compact bedroom, additional storage is available on the fourth floor when needed.



Section of the walk-in closet, to show how storage can be solved with a raised bed on drawers, shelves and hanging for clothes.

AXIALITY/SIGHTLINES/CORNER WINDOW/FURNISHABILITY



FURNISHABILITY
52.9%

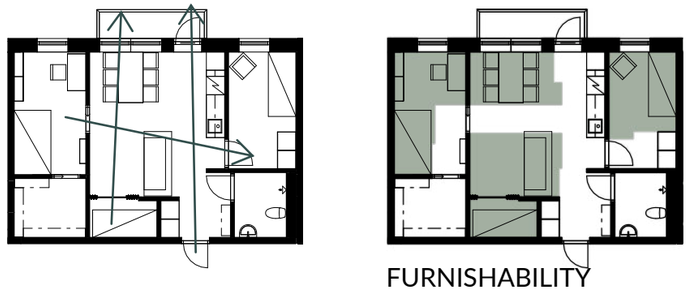
ILLUSTRATIONS - APARTMENT 2B

APARTMENT 3A - SINGLE-SIDED FACADE
THREE ROOMS AND KITCHEN - 53,9 sqm

The apartment has two bedrooms and a small sleeping alcove, which can also be used as a hidden work area. The open plan provide a bright space for socializing, although most of the socializing probably takes place in the shared areas of the house.

The larger bedroom has a walk-in closet, but if needed, there is storage on the fourth floor.

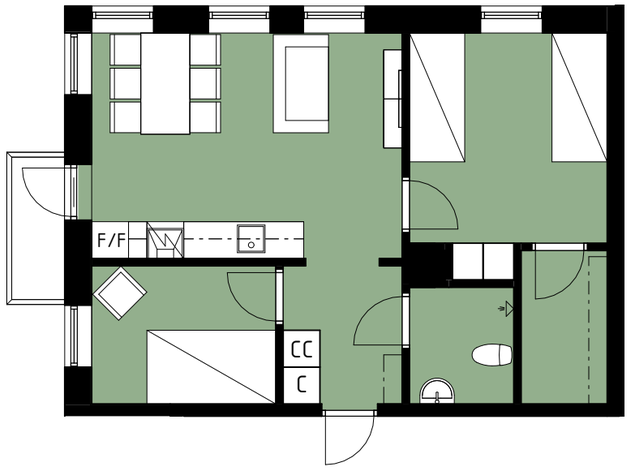
AXIALITY/SIGHTLINES/FURNISHABILITY



FURNISHABILITY
50.2%

ILLUSTRATION - APARTMENT 3A

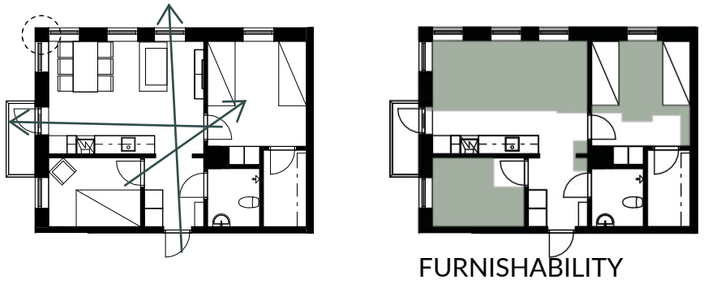
APARTMENT 3B - CORNER APARTMENT
THREE ROOMS AND KITCHEN - 49,6 sqm



The apartment has two bedrooms, one smaller and one bigger. The open plan and corner windom provide a bright space for socializing, although most of the socializing probably takes place in the shared areas of the house.

The larger bedroom has a walk-in closet, but if needed, there is storage on the fourth floor.

AXIALITY/SIGHTLINES/CORNER WINDOW/FURNISHABILITY



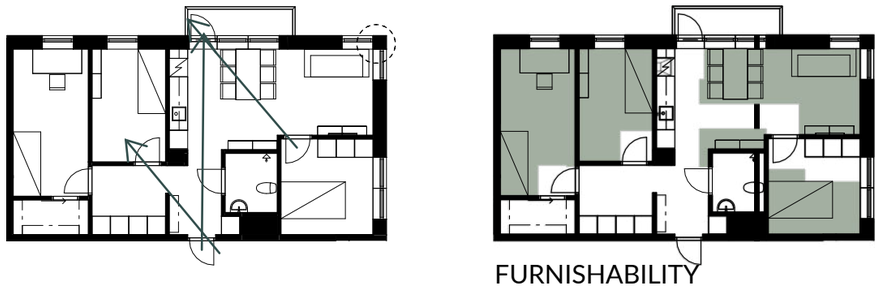
FURNISHABILITY
53.1%

ILLUSTRATIONS - APARTMENT 3B

APARTMENT 4A - CORNER APARTMENT

FOUR ROOMS AND KITCHEN - 67,8 sqm

AXIALITY/SIGHTLINES/CORNER WINDOW/FURNISHABILITY



FURNISHABILITY
55%

ILLUSTRATION - View from entry

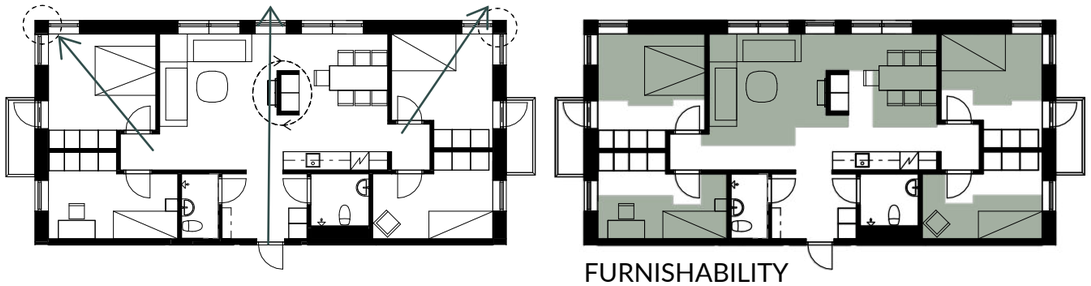
The layout is compact yet functional, with a bedroom for the child and a sleeping alcove with storage for the parent. The open floor plan provides a small social area, although most social interaction is likely to take place in the shared spaces of the building. Additional storage is available on the fourth floor if needed.

ILLUSTRATIONS - Living room and kitchen area

APARTMENT 5A - DOUBLE CORNER APARTMENT - CO-LIVING WITHIN CO-HOUSING

FIVE ROOMS AND KITCHEN - 94,2 sqm

AXIALITY/SIGHTLINES/MOVEMENT/CORNER WINDOW/FURNISHABILITY



FURNISHABILITY
52.5%

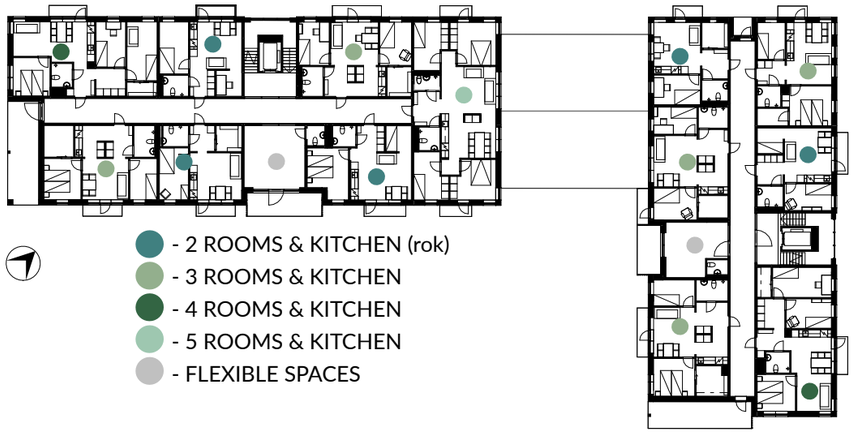
ILLUSTRATION - Living room area

When you enter the apartment, you are greeted by a larger open and social area, with the kitchen area on the right and the living room on the left. In the corner of the apartment there are two equally sized bedroom areas, with a larger and a smaller bedroom. The apartment is intended to be co-living inside co-housing, shared by two families, but can also be rented by a larger family. There is wardrobe space in each bedroom area, but more storage is also available on the 4th floor.

ILLUSTRATION - Living room and kitchen area

FLOOR PLAN 2-5 - 1:500
AIMED AT ALL RESIDENTS

FLOOR 2-3 - APARTMENTS AND FLEX AREAS



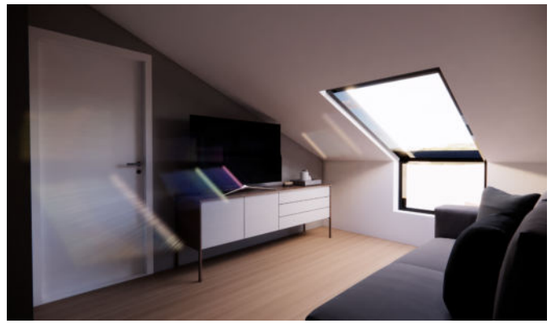
- 2 ROOMS & KITCHEN (rok)
- 3 ROOMS & KITCHEN
- 4 ROOMS & KITCHEN
- 5 ROOMS & KITCHEN
- FLEXIBLE SPACES

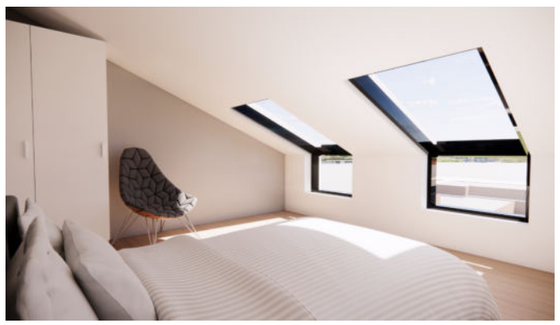
On floors 2-3, the apartments are not specifically aimed at single parents. The main difference is that more of them have space for a double bed in the bedroom.

On the fourth floor, there are no shared indoor areas except for storage rooms. However, there is a large conservatory connected to a rooftop terrace, as well as another rooftop terrace on the other building volume. The top-floor

FLOOR 2-3:
Number of apartments: 26
Total area for apartments: 1402 sqm
Total shared area: 99,4 sqm

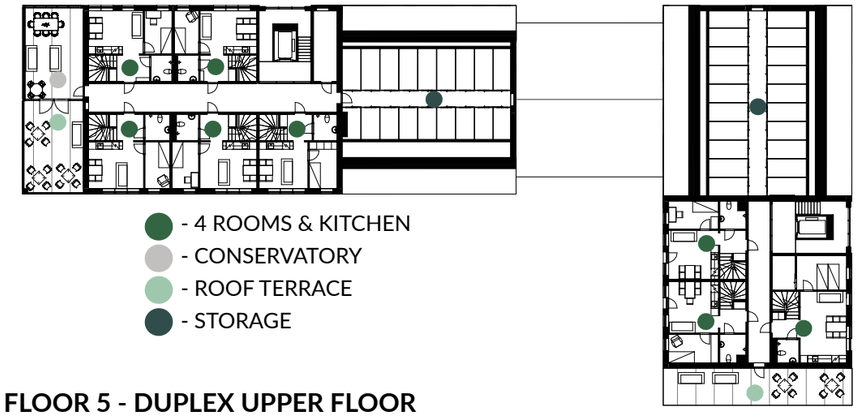
FLOOR 4-4,5:
Number of apartments: 8
Total area for apartments: 661,3 sqm
Total area for storage: 177,1 sqm
Total area of roof terrace: 82 sqm
Area of conservatory: 38,8 sqm





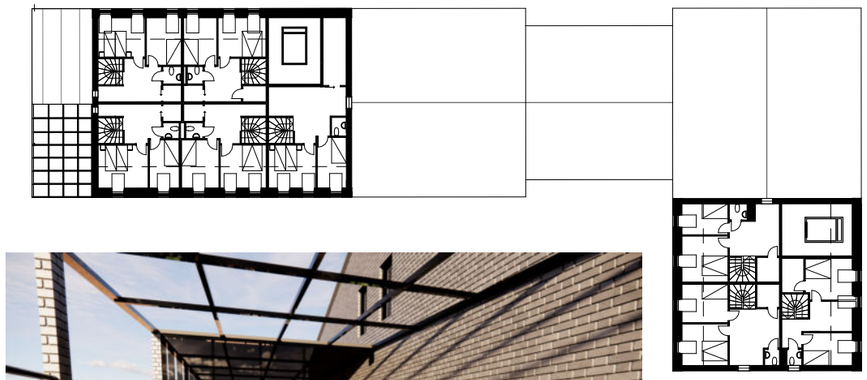
ILLUSTRATIONS - Second floor of duplex apartments, floor 5

FLOOR 4 - DUPLEX AND STORAGE



- 4 ROOMS & KITCHEN
- CONSERVATORY
- ROOF TERRACE
- STORAGE

FLOOR 5 - DUPLEX UPPER FLOOR



ILLUSTRATIONS - Roof terrace and conservatory

FACADES - 1:500

FACADE - NORTH-WEST

FACADE - SOUTH-EAST

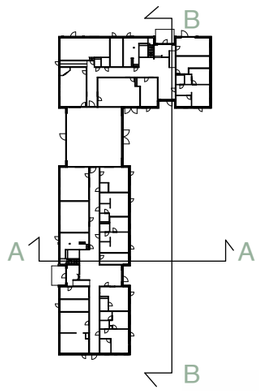
FACADE - NORTH-EAST

FACADE - SOUTH-WEST

BUILDING
Number of apartments: 52
Total area for apartments: 2941,6 sqm
Total shared area: 570,7 sqm
Total area: 3512,3 sqm
(shared spaces and apartments)

Only the shared spaces and apartments specific to the co-housing concept have been included in the area calculation. Spaces such as laundry rooms, recycling, stroller storage, and technical rooms have not been included, as these functions are also found in traditional apartment buildings and are therefore not considered necessary to add to the area used to compare with the areas from a regular apartment building.

SECTIONS - 1:400



SECTION A-A

Section A-A shows the stairwell and floor heights, and also gives a look into one of the duplex apartments.
Section B-B shows how the height difference from street level is managed, with a ramp leading up to the entrance level of the building.

SECTION B-B

COMPARISON

Apartment types in the design proposal:		**Total area for a regular apartment:**
1 rok:	1	1x32,5=32,5 sqm
2 rok:	16	16x52=832 sqm
3 rok:	17	17x74=1252 sqm
4 rok:	14	14x94=1316 sqm
5 rok:	3	3x116=348 sqm
		Total area: 3780,5 sqm
		Difference in area from the design proposal: 268,2 sqm.

REFLECTION
Compared to a conventional apartment building, the design proposal is 268 sqm smaller, despite having a total of 570 sqm of shared spaces for the residents. 268 square meters may not seem like much, but it corresponds to approximately five medium-sized two-room apartments. This demonstrates that a co-housing project does not need to take up more space but can instead use the available area more efficiently. By sharing certain functions, the total building area can be reduced, saving resources both during construction and in use, while also enhancing the quality of living through access to shared spaces.

04. DISCUSSION

SUMMARY

The research in this master's thesis shows that single parents often have a weaker economic position, suffer more from limited social networks, and carry an increased caregiving responsibility, which can negatively affect both the parents themselves and their children. It also becomes clear that the design of shared spaces in housing has a impact on the experience of safety, community, and quality of life. This thesis has examined how affordable co-housing can be designed to meet the economic, social, and sustainable housing needs of single parents. Through a combination of literature studies, surveys, reference projects, and study visits where both spatial and social needs were identified, this has been used to develop a design proposal where private and shared spaces are interconnected to create a supportive and social living environment. The work shows that single parents seek safe, child-friendly, and practically functioning living environments where there is room for community, but also respect for privacy. By reducing the size of private living spaces and instead giving space to shared areas, both construction costs and resource consumption can be reduced, making housing more economically accessible and environmentally sustainable. The sharing of spaces, functions, and resources also enables a more efficient use of area and energy over time.

CONCLUSION

Co-housing appears as a possible alternative to support the everyday life of single parents, compared to conventional forms of housing. It has the potential to function as a social safety net in daily life by enabling the sharing of resources and also creating everyday social support. This form of housing can help reduce both the financial burden and the social isolation that many single parents experience.

The design proposal developed focuses on creating a balance between privacy and community, with smaller, compact private dwellings complemented by generous, well-placed shared spaces in various sizes, from larger, more social areas to smaller, more intimate semi-private rooms. This flexibility is an important part of the proposal, as it enables different degrees of social participation and interaction based on residents' needs. A relatively large part of the work has focused on the individual apartments, with the ambition to create compact but well-planned private homes that still feel functional and pleasant. By aiming to make private spaces more efficient, space is freed up for shared areas, which can reduce construction costs and allow for more socially oriented living environments. Placing shared spaces partially spread out across the floors, instead of concentrating them solely on one level, is another design strategy aimed at creating natural encounters and integration in everyday life. As the spaces are flexible, they can be used based on the needs of the residents. This also gives children the opportunity to play close to home, without it coming at the expense of the needs of adults.

Finding the right balance between private and shared spaces has been one of the biggest design challenges. For the private dwellings, the focus has been on trying to create functional apartments despite significantly smaller floor areas. In retrospect, it might have been easier to design shallower apartments, as the depth sometimes made it difficult to use the space optimally. A challenge with the proposal, and with co-housing in general, can be the need for social engagement among residents in order for it to function fully as intended. However, the proposal attempts to address this by offering different levels of shared living, allowing residents to choose how active they want to be. Another potential disadvantage is that such projects in practice require commitment from individuals, and may be difficult to realize within today's housing market, where standardized solutions are preferred by construction companies.

Affordability can still be achieved through reduced private space in combination with shared functions. This, especially in combination with shared resources such as household appliances, also contributes to ecological sustainability. The possibility of resource sharing, smart floor plan design, the use of durable materials, and energy production through solar panels are examples of design choices that make the project more sustainable from a social, economic, and environmental perspective.

REFLECTION

In conversations with residents in cohousing, it was highlighted that prejudices are often a reason why more people do not choose to live in this way, something the author also recognized from before starting the master's thesis. During the course of the work, a re-evaluation took place, from a perception of cohousing as something where almost everything is shared (as in co-living), to an understanding of the Swedish model, where each household has its own apartment but also access to shared spaces. During the preparatory course for the thesis, the focus was mainly on finding cohousing examples for single parents, which turned out to be difficult. The Swedish examples that were found were mostly historical, with limited relevance for how cohousing functions today. However, during the research for the thesis, the Swedish model of cohousing was studied more in depth, consisting of private apartments and adjoining shared spaces.

One of the most important insights was that architecture is not only about space and form, but also about how what is designed can enable social interaction and support. This feels particularly important for single parents, but also for cohousing itself. It also became clearer how housing affects people's well-being, as it is a place for rest, recovery, community and support.

A large part of the design reflections has focused on how individual apartments can be optimized for single parents with many needs in a limited space. During the process, it became clear that it is often the private part of the home that needs to function the best for these households. The focus has been on trying to find solutions for how different functions can be integrated in small spaces without compromising quality of life.

The shared spaces in the project were then given the role of complementing the private apartments by offering what cannot fit in a small home, such as areas for play, socializing or hobbies. Even though shared spaces are important for building social networks, it also became evident that the private apartment must work well on its own for the shared areas to be perceived as attractive to use.

Reflections following study visits and interviews also led to the understanding that cohousing needs to be flexible, and that it is not always the most vulnerable groups who have the greatest ability to contribute to the community. Therefore, a mixed target group is proposed, where parents, elderly people and other small households can contribute in different ways. This can strengthen the social network without placing the entire responsibility for the community on single parents.

In summary, the work has shown that the project is not only about square meters, but also about quality of life and the everyday puzzle, especially when it comes to supporting parenting in vulnerable life situations. The final design proposal should therefore be seen both as an architectural proposition and as a contribution to the discussion about how future housing can meet various needs, with particular attention to groups who otherwise risk being excluded. There is also a hope that the project can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of what cohousing can be in today's society.

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Even though the project presents a design proposal that can address the needs of single parents, there are several aspects that can be further developed. A future in-depth study could include a more detailed analysis of housing economy related to construction systems, material choices, and operating costs over time. Another improvement would be to conduct additional surveys or workshops with potential residents to review and adjust the functionality and layout of the spaces. It would have been interesting to analyze the apartments in more detail, which could have led to an even better design.

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FIGURE LIST

The list of figures consists of photos and illustrations from external sources, used with permission. Other photos, illustrations, diagrams, and renderings are created by the author and are therefore not included in the list.

Figure 1-2: Plan drawings from "Under samma tak" by Helena Westholm at Ferrum arkitekter, Retrieved 250416 from https://www.undersammatak.org/showfile/?filID=29

Figure 3 Plan drawings from Kupan kollektivhus Retrieved 250227 by mail from a member of the building's board

Figure 4-6: Plan drawings and photos from Treberspurg & Partner Architecten https://www.treberspurg.com/: Retrieved 250130 by mail from the architects.

Figure 7-13: Plan illustrations, concept and photos from Cutwork Studios. Retrieved 250215 from https://cutworkstudio.com/commune

Figure 14: Maps from *Eskilstunakartan*. (2025). Eskilstuna Kommun. Retrieved 250301 from https://karta.eskilstuna.se/webb/

AI-APPENDIX

AI and Google Translate have been used to translate the text into English, as the author writes more fluently in Swedish. The prompt used before pasting the text is: Translate to English, do not change the content of the text and do not rephrase it. Then smaller sections of text have been translated, to try to avoid too many changes to the content of the text.