

Form Follows Fiction

A Story of Stockholm Kollektivhus (1906-2018):

From Modernist ideal to grass-roots appeal

AR3EX320 Explore Lab Graduation
MSc Architecture, Technische Universiteit Delft

Benjamin Summers

4624831
bts.arch@gmail.com

October 2018

Explore Lab

Ir. L.C. Tummers, Ir. P. Kuitenbrouwer, Ir. G. Koskamp, Ir. E. van Dooren

Abstract – This paper researches the formation of the Swedish variant of cohousing (*kollektivhus*) by examining the ideas and cultures which inspired it and asks the question: what has been the contribution of the architect within this history?

Re-writing the script for life at home has been a collective task involving many agents of change and, perhaps most interestingly, the role of the architect in Sweden has extended beyond usual domains of operation to be crucial to the genesis and sustenance (as well as delivery) of the cohousing movement. Through writing radical manifestos, creating resident groups and indeed living in their own projects, architects have been instrumental in developing what is now a self-sustaining movement for progressive housing of a social ambition.

Significantly though, it is the transition from a top-down institutional application of the concept to a grass-roots driven movement – and the accompanying integration of end-users in the design process as experts in living - that proves to be the defining moment addressed by this research.

Key words – kollektivhus, cohousing, collaborative housing, ideal home, domestic labour, shared kitchens, Sweden, Stockholm

0 Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1. Fetishization of the ideal home & the disparity between fiction and reality	
1.2. Ideological tensions as basis for fictional atmospheres	
1.3. The kitchen as the key battleground of 20 th century domestic revolution	
1.4. Non-conventional living typologies at the cutting edge of humanistic activism	
1.5. Urban co-habitation: seeking company in the wake of nuclear family decline	
1.6. Cohousing communities as apolitical local resilience networks	
1.7. Why the fictional construction of the ideal home is vital to the future	
1.8. Why Sweden?	
1.9. Case study selection criteria	
2. From utopian dream to practical application (1820-1900)	10
2.1. Rising from the ashes: social opportunity through Haussmanian restructuring	
2.2. Fourier's <i>Phalanstère</i> : a hedonistic paradise	
2.3. The <i>Familistère</i> as a social palace for the masses	
2.4. Marx & Engels' utopian re-appropriation	
3. <i>Einküchenhaus</i> & early central-kitchen experiments (1901-1930)	13
3.1. Women's work and home economics	
3.2. <i>Hemgården</i> : Stockholm's first central kitchen experiment	
3.3. Strong, simple, colourful homeliness: pre-modern Swedish domestic ideals	
3.4. Bringing 'the good life' to the masses	
3.5. Off to work for you! The patriarchal 'liberation' of the housewife	
4. 1st-generation kollektivhus: the functionalist serviced apartment block (1931-1970)	17
4.1. Swedish Modernism as oxymoron – inclusive yet purist stylistic variant	
4.2. Social Democratic Party housing policy	
4.3. Markelius & Myrdal's <i>Kollektivhuset</i> : A vision for experimental living	
4.4. Olle Engkvist's kollektivhus empire	
4.5. Beginning of the end: demise of the welfare state and rise of neoliberal individualism	
4.6. Sanitised domesticity and the diminishing appeal of no housework	
5. 2nd-generation kollektivhus & collaborative housing (1971-present)	24
5.1. <i>Bo i Gemenskap</i> (Living in Community): A practical but fun solution	
5.2. Counter-cultural resistance	
5.3. Substance over style	
5.4. Maximum Leisure	
5.5. Architecture is participation. Participation is community.	
5.6. Mainstreaming radical housing	
5.7. Design principles as embodied ideologies	
6. Conclusions	30
6.1. Architect as <i>scenius</i>	

- 6.2. The evolving image of the ideal collective house
- 6.3. Hard-working domestic elegance through a utilitarian reading of beauty
- 6.4. Self-discovery through collective housing reform

7. Appendices

34

- 7.1. Useful definitions
- 7.2. Literature review categories
- 7.3. Bibliography
- 7.4. Timeline
- 7.5. Field work
 - 7.5.1. Interviews
 - 7.5.2. Drawn case study analysis
- 7.6. Kollektivhus design principles
- 7.7. Additional images

1 Introduction

“Form follows fiction”

Bernard Tschumi

The 19th and 20th centuries saw unprecedented urbanisation which necessitated radical proposals for re-writing the popular narrative of how life should be lived. One of these conditions – the birth of Modernism – gave rise to Louis Sullivan’s¹ infamous dictum ‘form [ever] follows function’². Bernard Tschumi’s³ witty reworking of the phrase embodies a sense that architecture is derived not just from rationalised ergonomic requirements for acts of life but also from a somehow poetic synthesis of culture, politics, economics and the like. This element of interpretation wherein the architect acts as a conduit for a collective consciousness or zeitgeist is perhaps one of the most overlooked functions of the architect, particularly if one comprehends that the products of architecture (both real/built and imagined/unbuilt) define popular expectations and ambitions for how we live in and around buildings for generations to come. Seeing through this lens, it becomes fascinating to look again at the chaotic search for new forms of habitation in recent history, understanding how the collective narrative of *the ideal home* (and specifically *the ideal collective house*) was shaped and quite literally penned by some of the key minds of the time.

1.1 Fetishization of the ideal home & the disparity between fiction and reality

Far from being a secular topic of academic interest, Niklas Maak (1972-) points out that ideal home is to this day a public topic of such interest that it verges on fetishization⁴. From magazines laden with glossy pictures of pristine interiors to Instagram adverts showcasing the latest in lifestyle chic, we are bombarded with reference points for ways of living from the start of our waking day to the end. Make no mistake, regardless of whether or not an image is directly referencing a quality of built environment or habitation, the inferences can be drawn through: it is the exact job of marketeers across the globe to decipher what coffee table you might buy for your living room based on the milk that you drink and the shoes that you wear. The current situation is most interesting in this respect because of the unprecedented connectedness between our digital profiles and our real lives, drawing mass-communications ever closer to reality. In fact, the disparity between fiction and reality in times past proves to be an equally interesting point to discuss, as we shall see. But communication methods aside, it is the ideologies behind the images that give structure to analysis of the ideal home’s image.

¹ Louis Sullivan (1856-1924)

² Sullivan, Louis. *The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered* (1896). Lippincott's Magazine (March 1896): 403–409.

³ Bernard Tschumi (1944-)

⁴ Maak, Niklas. *Living Complex: From Zombie City to The New Communal* (2015), p12.

1.2 Ideological tensions as basis for fictional atmospheres

For the purposes of this paper, the ideological tensions which will be central to the discussion are:

- A. Collective versus Individual
- B. Servitude versus DIY
- C. Arts & Crafts versus Mass-Production
- D. Beauty versus Utility

Using these dichotomies, it becomes possible to tackle some thematically key questions. Why, for instance, was it once fashionable to populate rooms with gilt-edged pictures and exchange pleasantries in the sitting room, whilst maids scrubbed and chopped away in the grubby basement? Why, on the other hand, is it now in vogue to rapaciously display your knife skills over the kitchen counter, under which a vacuum bot clears away the culinary collateral damage? And why, finally, have certain groups within society decided that living (and working) together presents a better alternative than either of those options?

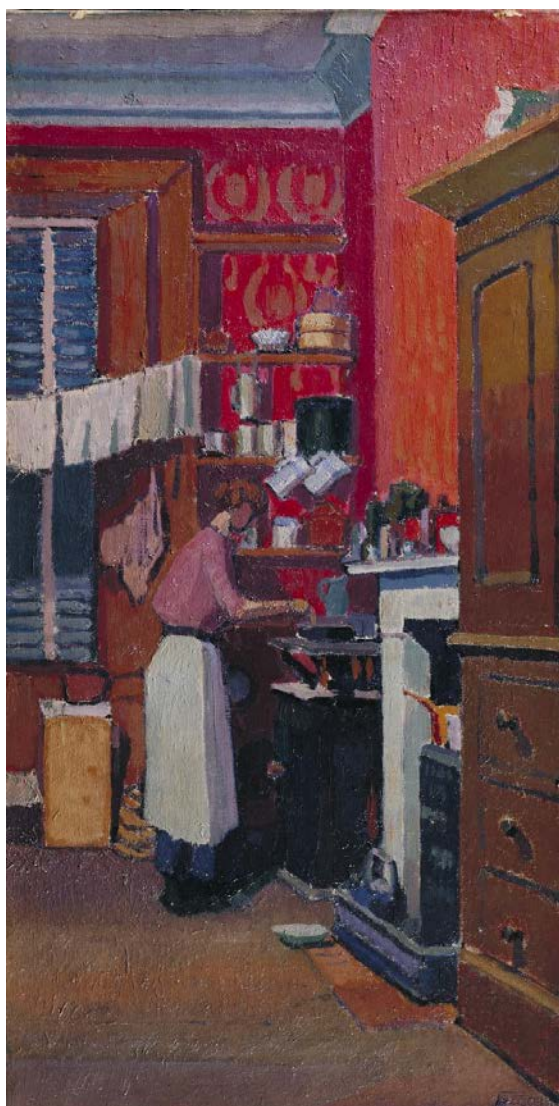


Figure 1a: Spencer Gore, *The Gas Cooker* (1913)

1.3 The kitchen as the key battleground of 20th century domestic revolution

Through the essay it will be made clear that the kitchen can arguably be understood as the key battleground of 20th century domestic revolution (and its implications for architectural design). At the beginning of the transformation, the image of the ideal home was a projection of bourgeois living arrangements in which the servitude of domestic workers enabled a leisurely life for the Master and Mistress of the household, free from the burdens of physical housework. The quality and arrangement of domestic spaces was thus strictly organised to adhere to this hierarchical division of occupants, allocating large and amenable spaces to resident-occupied rooms and conversely relegating servant quarters to less privileged positions. As changing economic and social conditions prohibited the continuation of this model, it followed that the kitchen – which had always been the domain of staff – assumed a new importance and role in the lives of the owners of the house. Later in the century, as the so-called emancipation of the housewife (who took on the displaced domestic burden) became of concern to domestic reformers, the kitchen gained yet more significance and was eventually elevated to a position of crucial vitality to households, both in fiction and in reality.

1.4 Non-conventional living typologies at the cutting edge of humanistic activism

Let us be clear: the practice of living together in non-conventional methods remains a niche practice. Even in Denmark, where such typologies have enjoyed an unusual level of success, the proportion in relation to general housing stock remains around 1%⁵. However, the very notion that such an idea now represents a level of best practice⁶ stands testament to the climate of diversity and acceptance that so many radical movements have fought to achieve. From the suffragettes to gay rights activists; from human rights advocates to racial equality campaigners; the goal has been to dismantle the constructs which divide us and eliminate the xenophobic *othering* of that which we do not recognise: the dream has been to recognise our unity in being human and thus celebrate being *together*. And in 2018 it's the collective house that increasingly appears to be the key method of dwelling allowing us to do this.

1.5 Urban co-habitation: seeking company in the wake of nuclear family decline

The concentric organisation of cities makes proximity to other people unavoidable and to a large extent, why would one want to avoid it? As Daniel Kurz (1957-) highlights, “the human being cannot do without community: it is only in exchange with others that we are truly ourselves”⁷. By this token, notions of privacy and sociability are constantly changing, sparking renewed vigour in the search for ways of living together that allow for a third space in between public and private; between communal and personal. A solution is presented by *collective housing* (of which *kollektivhus* is the Swedish variant), differentiated from the practice of conventional housing by its inclusion of shared

⁵ Lietaert, Matthieu. *The Growth of Cohousing in Europe*. (December 2007). Referenced October 2018. Available from: <https://www.cohousing.org/node/1537>

⁶ Fromm, Dorit. *Seeding Community: Collaborative Housing as a Strategy for Social and Neighbourhood Repair* (2012); *Built Environment*, Vol. 38, No. 3. Marcham: Alexandrine Press.

⁷ Kurz, Daniel. *Collective Forms of Living* (2015) Basel: Birkhauser.

facilities⁸. Collective housing was conceived in anticipation of demographic changes, predicting a collapse of the conventional nuclear family as the dominant social module to be housed. The original premise of the early 1900s was simple and compelling: the process of habitation should be purged of all barriers between women and work outside the home by collectivising domestic tasks of cooking, cleaning & childcare. With the superficial liberation of women from domestic labour came the relative weakening of the kitchen as the home's conventional human nucleus. Yet while there is now much greater parity in gender divisions of domestic labour for a variety of reasons, the larger proportion remains performed by women: a research report showed that in 1965 women performed 40 hours versus men's 14 hours; while despite a large swing, in 2010 women still contributed more, with 26 hours versus men's 17⁹. On this evidence it seems that the original mandate for collective housing remains poignant.

1.6 Cohousing communities as apolitical local resilience networks

That the conventional family is degrading at all gives cause for celebration to political ideologies at both the left and right ends of the spectrum. For communism, the goal of dismantling the family is explicit, decrying 'the foundation of the current bourgeois family on capital gain'¹⁰, preferring instead to tend towards the nation-as-family metaphor. Capitalism, on the other hand, has a more implicit tendency towards dissolving pre-existing structures which present barriers to the free movement of capital. As Bruno Latour provocatively reminds us, Margaret Thatcher embodied neoliberal sentiment when she proclaimed: "There is no such thing as society"¹¹. In either case – and despite the best intentions with which these ideologies are set out – the citizen is caught in the crossfire of warring factions. The safety net of a resilient domestic network offers some refuge from vested political interests, but cannot be realised unless the imagination of the public is set in the right direction.

1.7 Why the fictional construction of the ideal home is vital to the future

Ultimately, the architectural profession has a justified fascination with the determination of the ideal home, because it in turn determines the limits of action in building new dwellings: if it hasn't captured the collective imagination then it stands very little chance of taking root in reality. The construction of the ideal home is in essence a construction of atmospheres; an embodiment of ideologies in images and feelings that captures the imagination and engenders progressive experimentation in our patterns of dwelling. The changing picture of the good life from generation to generation gives clues as to what will soon become domestic reality: understanding where we have come from and why is to predict what is yet missing and where we must go next.

⁸ Vestbro, Dick Urban. *From Collective Housing to Cohousing – A Summary of Research* (2000). Michigan: Locke Science Publishing Company.

⁹ Bridgman, Benjamin; Dugan, Andrew; Lal, Mikhael; Osborne, Matthew; Villones, Shaunda. *Accounting for Household Production in the National Accounts, 1965–2010* (May 2012).

¹⁰ Marx, Karl; Engels, Friedrich. *Manifesto of the Communist Party: Chapter 2: Proletarians and Communists* (1848). London: Workers' Educational Association.

¹¹ Latour; Bruno: *Reassembling the Social* (2005). Oxford: Oxford University Press. p4.

1.8 Why Sweden?

The case of Sweden over the 20th Century is a particularly interesting study of the development and evolution of cohousing for a number of reasons. Firstly, the nation's neutrality during the World Wars precluded them from enduring the worst effects of conflict, and so as a country their ability to focus on progressive housing policy was nowhere near as badly impaired as participants who were hamstrung by mass rebuilding efforts.

Secondly, the relative consistency of governing party with an interest in such policies (Sweden's Social Democratic Party retained power for 21 of 25 terms from 1917-2000; 69 of 83 years) ensured steady support for the fledgling habitation experiment through times of thick and thin.

Thirdly, the Swedish Modernist movement took a rather unique position of integrating rather than alienating the national Arts & Crafts cultures which – bearing in mind the relation of homecrafts culture to the conventional housewife's pastimes and interior decoration responsibilities – positions Sweden as a particularly intriguing location to study when thinking about domestic revolutions and home ideals and their intersection with a growing collective housing movement.

Fourthly, the nation's historic interest in promoting gender equality has resulted in the second-highest proportion of female members of parliament worldwide¹², suggesting that not only has Sweden given prominence to women in fictional but also in formal terms.

And lastly, the defining characteristic of Swedish *kollektivhus* as an urban phenomenon contained within singular medium-rise buildings defines it as a social condenser placed at the forefront of cultural progression¹³. While density alone does not represent a goal in itself, the typology and urban location of these examples does add extra interest to a housing development story which is very much concerned with the notion of the minimum dwelling and the evolution of domestic culture.

1.9 Field work & case study selection criteria

This paper mainly focuses on a written account of the wider historical context of an architectural typology. While this is generally sufficient to illustrate the findings made by the research, the implications for the object-building are still of interest for the eventual goal of translating the research into a design project. As such, three key case studies were chosen for further study and surveyed on a trip to Stockholm in December 2018. These are:

1. *Kollektivhuset* by Sven Markelius & Alva Myrdal (1935)
2. *Fardknappen* by Jan Lundqvist Arkitekter (1993)
3. *Sjofarten* by Alessandro Ripellino Arkitekter (2007)

¹² In 2017, Sweden had 44% parliamentary seats held by women. Rwanda, Bolivia, Cuba, Iceland and Nicaragua all had more, but in order to compare apples with apples we will only include MEDC's (Sweden and Iceland) in the definition. Source: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?year_high_desc=true

¹³ To be clear, the assumption is that in recent history, cultural evolution has been accelerated to a much greater extent by developments in urban locales than in their rural counterparts.

The first two of these three examples are chosen as seminal examples which represent both: a key moment in the history of kollektivhus and; an extreme application of ideology through design strategy.

The last example is chosen as a more moderate and contemporary iteration which demonstrates how the more radical ideas could be tempered to make themselves more applicable for wider application; mainstreaming, in other words.

Furthermore, interviews were carried out in person with kollektivhus residents and architects, notably including Kerstin Kärnekull (Head of National Kollektivhus Association and Resident & Chairperson at Fardknappen Kollektivhus).

Both the drawn analysis and the interviews are illustratively referenced in-line in the essay, and are included in full in the appendices.

2 From utopian dream to practical application (1820-1900)

In order to tell a story, in this instance the story of the collective housing phenomenon, it often makes sense to start at the beginning. The tale of collective housing is no different, and by briefly introducing some of the major characters and ideas, we can begin to set the scene. While our focus lies on a specific era and location (20th century Stockholm), it is difficult to properly understand the significance and criticality of those events without some knowledge of the urbanite melting pot from which those ideas were born; in this case, Paris and London in the 1800s.

2.1 Rising from the ashes: social opportunity through Haussmanian restructuring

From the middle of the 19th century there were calls for widespread re-planning of urban centres across Europe^{14,15}. The medieval urban fabric had become over-crowded as the industrial revolution drew the population in from the countryside, and ailments arising from the narrow, poorly-lit and poorly-ventilated streets were rife.

Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann's renovations of Paris (1853-1870) demolished swathes of city deemed unsanitary and out-dated; installing in their place grand avenues (*boulevards*), open spaces (*places*), and new infrastructure such as sewers, fountains and aqueducts.

By resolving the most pressing concerns of public health, Haussmann's interventions opened the door to a more nuanced set of issues relating to the social aspects of dwelling; the scene was set for a re-imagining of the possibilities for how society could be organised, and thereby live. For instance, should the urbanisation of the family necessitate its restructuring? Could there be logistical advantages to be gained from the new-found proximity of dwellings? And how could the evidently lavish lifestyles of the bourgeois be economically replicated for all to enjoy?



Figure 2a: The phalanstère as the future (*l'avenir*), Charles Fourier (1832). Built in the classical French palais style, the intention was for collective spaces at ground floor and second floor to be served by servant's quarters sandwiched in between. An arcaded walkway would create sheltered connection between all sections of the building.

¹⁴ Engels, Friedrich. *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England [Condition of the Working Class in England]* (1845). Leipzig: Otto Wigand.

¹⁵ Chadwick; Edwin, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population and on the Means of It's Improvement* (1842). London: H. M. Stationery.

2.2 Fourier's Phalanstère: a hedonistic paradise

In fact, the foundations for such conversations were set by the utopian writings of another Frenchman, philanthropist Charles Fourier (1772-1837). In these writings, Fourier set out visions for communal living, gender equality and abolished property laws that provided a fantastical counterpoint to the practical urban reforms of Paris. Going beyond the conventional idea of the home as a place of residence for a single-family unit, he envisioned a future where the human being's nature as a social animal was fully embraced, and not exiled behind the locked doors of stiff upper lips and prim properness. His rejection of the societal norms of the time proved difficult to stomach for the conservative elite who would need to be convinced to set their pens (and pockets) into motion if such ideas were ever to take root. So fanciful were his visions that they drew criticisms from contemporaries for their implausibility, leading Karl Marx (1818-1883) himself to complain that Fourier's utopia was all in his mind¹⁶ and lacked grounding in reality.

2.3 The familistère as a 'social palace' for the masses

Nonetheless, many of the ideas in the texts were highly compelling, and drew attention beyond the academic field to garner firm support for their realisation. Jean-Baptiste Andre Godin (1817-1888) concretised Fourier's ideas in the *familistère* (1859-1884), building a palace-like structure with around 500 apartments, large internal courtyards, centralised meal provision and co-ordinated sanitation, intended as a grand societal enabler.

As other industrial philanthropists of the time had done, Godin attempted to use his position of authority and economic distinction for the betterment of the less fortunate. Noble as the cause was, both Fourier and Godin failed to see the irony that their visions for the many were, at their heart, transpositions of the ideals adhered to by the few. A cynical retrospective view would be that rather than truly empowering and elevating the residents of the familistère, Godin was instead enacting industrial-scale 'mansplaining', granting domestic liberty to working class men and women through building design only as long as the substance adhered to his vision and will.



Figure 2b: Internal courtyard at the familistère (1863)

¹⁶ Larsen, Lars Bang. *Giraffe and Anti-Giraffe: Charles Fourier's Artistic Thinking*. e-flux Journal [Internet]. June 2011 [cited October 2018]; #26. Available from: <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/26/67951/giraffe-and-anti-giraffe-charles-fourier-s-artistic-thinking/>

2.4 Marx & Engels' utopian re-appropriation

Marx and his contemporary Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) took a radically more critical view of how the elevation of the great unwashed should be enacted, writing at great length about the undercurrent of power struggles and class divides that defined the tense disparity between 'the good life' and the means of most people to attain it. They strove to make clear that not only were the *bourgeoisie* (property-owning classes) and the *proletariat* (working & renting classes) utterly divided, but also that until the lower classes wrested their share of the means of production and made their voices heard, the overriding narrative would be written by those who held the pen; namely the upper classes.

Accepting Tschumi's claim of fiction's power to shape form, it becomes clear that without the pen, working class people would not have the means to express their fiction, and so would forever be consigned to live in poorer versions of unattainable bourgeois ideals. And with proletarian stagnation, the vision for truly fantastic mass housing would remain elusive. Thank goodness then, that the previously-marginalised elements of society would soon elbow their way into the popular narrative with blockbusters of such magnitude that they would be impossible to ignore.



Figure 2c: *The dreamt Phalanstère of Charles Fourier* by Laurent Pelletier (1868). Watercolour on paper.

3 Einküchenhaus & early central kitchen experiments (1901-1930)

3.1 Women's work and home economics

By the dawn of the 20th century, the campaign for women's suffrage was well underway, and with it came increased space and attention in public fora.

The 1901 publication of Lily Braun (1865-1916) entitled *Frauenarbeit und Hauswirtschaft* (Women's Work and Home Economics) revitalised the debate over the role of the woman at home and made firm proposals for a new model of living called *einküchenhaus* (one kitchen house) based around central kitchens and professionalised housekeeping. Central to the proposed reforms were a number of social concerns¹⁷ such as the emancipation of the housewife, redistribution of domestic labour, and the breakdown of the nuclear family. Through the sharing of space and services, it was argued, not only could families benefit from financial economies of scale, but women could also finally take their rightful place in the world of work, bringing a greater balance to the structure of the family. The economic and social benefits of the model promoted in the text proved too strong a stimulus to resist and, as a result, pilot projects were built in a number of cities across Germanic-speaking Europe: first in Copenhagen, Stockholm and Berlin; and later in Letchworth, London, Zurich, Hamburg, Vienna and Amsterdam¹⁸.



Figure 3a: Hemgården, Hagstrom & Ekman (1906)

¹⁷ As we will see a little later, the term social is in itself debatably unhelpful, or at least requires some redefinition by Bruno Latour to become workable.

¹⁸ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Einküchenhaus>

3.2 Hemgården: Stockholm's first central kitchen experiment

These first examples of collective housing in Stockholm – such as Hemgården, built 1906 – were organised around pre-existing bourgeois principles, operating as serviced apartment buildings with professionalised cooking and cleaning, while child care was often also integrated. The associated costs of the extra staff therefore restricted the appeal of such a model to a small band of society sitting between those who could afford large dwellings with their own servants, and those in smaller dwellings where the housewife was performed the domestic labour for free. Rather than enacting truly revolutionary widespread reform, the model was restricted to stimulating such changes, and must have influenced the thoughts of Grete Schütte-Lihotzky (1896-2000) in her designs for the Frankfurt Kitchen, a rationalised model for kitchens in small apartments which did directly contribute to mainstream domestic advancement.

Nonetheless, at a time when childcare services were thin on the ground, and the burden of housework laid heavily on the shoulders of women (who were also striving to enter the workplace), these projects served to advance an agenda of co-operation and equality¹⁹, liberating those few that were privileged enough to access them.



Figure 3b: *The Frankfurt Kitchen* by Grete Schütte-Lihotzky (1926)

¹⁹ Of a certain sort, admittedly...

3.3 Strong, simple, colourful homeliness: pre-modern Swedish domestic ideals

Simultaneously to the built developments, writers in Sweden were making strides towards revising the aesthetics of the idyllic domestic life. Between 1899 and 1913, Ellen Key (1849-1926) published various revisions to her publication *Beauty in the Home* wherein she weaved an intricate web of dos and don'ts for the homemaker-to-be, painting vivid literary pictures of colourful yet restrained decoration, charming crafted objects and appreciation of nature in the form of clear and simple expression. The painter Carl Larsson (1853-1919) was a close friend of Key's, and his watercolours of an idealised version of his own family (Karin and their eight children) provided great inspiration as well as illustration for her writings. In these scenes, the home is furnished with "somewhat rustic-looking pieces" designed by the couple, and textiles created by Karin, who was inspired by traditional crafts²⁰.

Key's voice is loud and heartfelt in advocating an attention to one's own heart in seeking beauty in all that surrounds us, unequivocally equating good taste in objects to a virtuous and wholesome life. This fetishization of the object does at times feel rather over the top, if not altogether perverse, such as when she says: "If people... were not so strongly enticed by food, they would instead be able to gladden one another with the noble and lasting fruits of higher pleasures"²¹. Certainly, the limited virtue of the object to nourish encourages cracks to form in Key's manifesto, and one wonders of the usefulness of such a guide as an encouragement to elevate the impoverished and advance civilisation.

Nonetheless, the care for the handmade, the natural, and the capacity of colour to affect the atmospheres of rooms shows the sensitive and warm origins of the stylistic design variant particular to Sweden, reminding one of the qualities that have made Swedish design so internationally-desirable and cementing its place as one of the key texts of the generation.

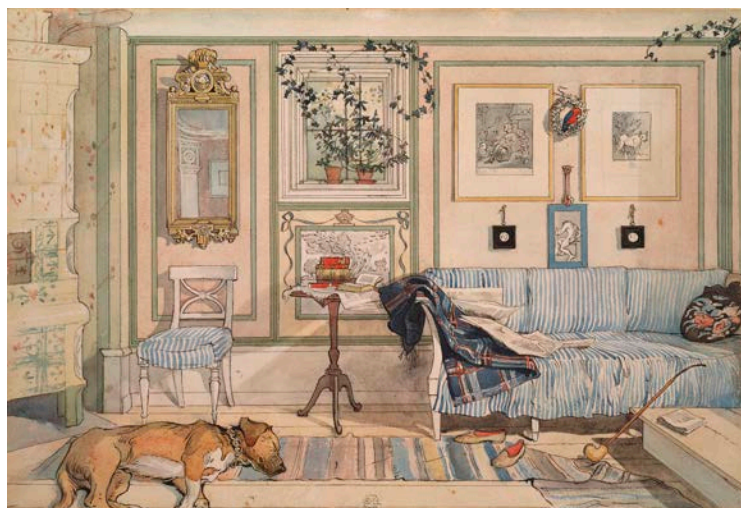


Figure 3c: Carl Larsson, *Lathörmet [Cosy corner]* (1894). Watercolour on paper.

²⁰ Miller Lane, Barbara. *An Introduction to Ellen Key's "Beauty in the Home"* (2008). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art.

²¹ Key, Ellen; *Beauty In The Home* (Originally 1899, English translation 2008). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art. p52

3.4 Bringing ‘the good life’ to the masses

In contrast to Key’s occasionally overzealous writings, the 1919 work *Better Things for Everyday Life* by Gregor Paulsson (1889-1977) seems to benefit from a prolonged period of retrospect, managing to penetrate beyond the aesthetic surface and reveal fragments of ethic underneath. By addressing the principles of end-user preference and manufacturing methods driving forward the production of objects, Paulsson picks out the bones for a new model of societal relation to consumption. In the rationalisation and reduction of form, he argues, “taste [can] certainly become more uniform”²². And the argument follows that if demand can be focused on a smaller range of mass-produced possibilities then development towards the utopian zenith (beauty in everyday life) can also be accelerated.

Underlying the central premise is an implication that in flattening consumer preference there is an accompanying flattening of class structure which echoes Marxist sentiments of proletarian seizure of the means of production. Although Paulsson astutely appeals on economic terms of free competition to the industrial magnates currently owning the means of production, and one senses quite strongly here the Swedish propensity for pragmatic decision-making, by removing the need for inexpensive objects to imitate expensive ones, accessibility to ‘the good life’ is cracked wide open.

3.5 Off to work for you! The patriarchal ‘liberation’ of the housewife

Returning to the implementation of the developing ideologies underlying the image of the ideal home, one can clearly sense the increasing appreciation for utility as a form of beauty, as opposed to a quality existing only in decoration that would be tainted by the implication of usefulness. Controversially, one might also remark that the idea of beauty was being reassessed more widely in society: the archaic patriarchal relegation of women to a decorative position was increasingly decomposing; relenting to accommodate the equally-valuable contribution of women to economy (both social and monetary).

The kitchen’s position in this dialogue was a burgeoning one: as utilitarian qualities started to be admired through the merits of industrial production, it became conceivable that the kitchen could also be a place of pleasurable qualities.



Figure 3d: Carl Larsson, *Köket* [*The kitchen*] (1898). Watercolour on paper.

22 Paulsson, Gregor. *Better Things for Everyday Life* (1919). Stockholm: 79

4 1st-generation *kollektivhus*: the functionalist serviced apartment block (1931-1970)

By 1930 Swedish Modernism was in the final stages of being born, and the Stockholm Exhibition was held to showcase the nation's prodigious new child. In contrast to similar displays of design in other countries, the show was infused with an accessible sense of humanity and warmth that was encapsulated and explained in the review by Alvar Aalto (1898-1976):

“The deliberate social message that the Stockholm Exhibition is intended to convey is expressed in the architectural language of pure spontaneous joy. There is a festive elegance, but also a childlike lack of inhibition about it all... This is not a composition of glass, stone, and steel, as a visitor who despises functionalism might imagine; it is a composition of houses, flags, flowers, fireworks, happy people, and clean tablecloths”

Alvar Aalto

4.1 Swedish Modernism as oxymoron – inclusive yet purist stylistic variant

Two years later *acceptera* was published, encapsulating the gathered momentum into a standalone document. Collectively written by the leading architects of the time²³, the shared authorship made it impossible to determine between individual voices: it was a ringing endorsement for a singular direction, above personal opinion. Most remarkably, the manifesto stands almost alone in attempting to unite divisive dualisms expounded in similar projects from other countries; “[arguing] for art *and* technology, beauty *and* practicality, old *and* new, handicraft *and* mass-production...and which in essence also underpinned the entire social, political, and economic program of the Stockholm Exhibition – the individual *and* the mass”²⁴.



Figure 4a: Rendering of The Stockholm Exhibition by Max Söderholm (1930), Gouache on paper.

²³ Åhrén, Uno; Asplund, Gunnar; Gahn, Wolter; Markelius, Sven; and Sundahl, Eskil. *acceptera* (1932). Stockholm.

“All social and cultural values must come from above and eventually be forced on to the lower levels of society. This is the way it used to be and always must be, this is the law of social evolution. But this conclusion is after all merely a series of assertions and a mixture of *post hoc* and *propter hoc* reasoning and therefore lacks value... We cannot be inspired by an age if we feel no loyalty to it. We must place ourselves at its service, we must help to solve its problems”²⁵

acceptera

This unusually inclusive brand of purism is perhaps the reason why Modernism in Sweden engendered a spirit of integration rather than exclusivity in design. At a basic level this enabled a more human understanding of the potentials for technological (and functional) advancement in architecture – which at the very least representatively posed a counterpoint to the Corbusian maxim of ‘the house as a machine for living’. When the authors of *acceptera* predicted that the kollektivhus would be one of the major housing typologies of the future²⁶, they were working on the basis that the trending reduction of the working week would continue; opening the door to an increasingly leisurely world where time would more often be spent at home than at work. There was no doubt in the author’s minds that they were correct: calling upon its readers not to shrink back from modernity, but rather to “accept the reality that exists—only in that way have we any prospect of mastering it, taking it in hand, and altering it to create a culture that offers an adaptable tool for life.”²⁷

4.2 Social Democratic Party housing policy

A more grounded reason for kollektivhus’ genesis is that the Social Democratic Party of Sweden applied a strong political focus on the provision of housing from its election to power in 1932, and throughout the 43 years to follow in which it retained governmental control. Indeed, the closeness of ties between politics and architectural discourse at the time are further evidenced by the remarkable fact that the earlier manifesto *acceptera* was released by *Tidens*, the publishing arm of the Swedish Democratic Party. For all intents and purposes, one could easily suggest that, at this moment, there was almost no separation between the architect and the state.

In any case, whether through the innate qualities of the particular stylistic variant, or through governmental endorsement in such projects, the ideological alignment between the parties saw architects and developers endorsed to design and build a raft of functionalist serviced apartment blocks between 1935 and 1969 as part of a wider programme for progressive urban development. With concrete support in terms of subsidies and economic support, the government saw its sentiments for decent and equitable housing for all echoed in the sentiment with which *Kollektivhuset* was presented in 1935: “*Individuell kultur genom kollektiv teknik* (Individual Culture through Collective Technique)”²⁸.

²⁵ Ibid. pp149-151

²⁶ Ibid. p198

²⁷ Ibid. p338

²⁸ Catalogue text from *Svenska Slöjdföreningens Tidskrift Form*, (May 1935).

4.3 Markelius & Myrdal's Kollektivhuset: A vision for experimental living

Designed by architect Sven Markelius in collaboration with sociologist Alva Myrdal, Kollektivhuset (1935) was a wildly radical proposal from the very beginning with a centralised kitchen & restaurant; a collectivised shop and an experimental nursery for children at ground floor, as well as a professional laundry service in the basement. Dumb waiters took food directly from the restaurant into apartments if a private meal was preferred, and chutes in the corridors took rubbish and dirty laundry directly to the cleaning service below ground. It imagined scenes of cleanliness and efficiency which did away with the mess of housekeeping, freeing the inhabitants to make better use of their free time outside gainful employment. In this case, it was intended that it be a house for the educated middle class: the sociologist, scientists, philosophers and architects; a melting pot for provocative discussions to simmer into the slow-cooked beginnings of a recipe for the future.

Markelius himself lived there for many years²⁹, demonstrating his faith in the ideas which he also saw as the solution for others. Myrdal too had intended to live there, but her commitment wavered as the pending birth of her children and the diminutive size of the Kollektivhuset apartments persuaded her to commission Markelius to design a countryside villa instead. One would suggest that this did not bode well for the future success of the project, in the same way that one would be suspicious of a restaurant owner who refused to eat the food served in their own restaurant.

4.5 Olle Engkvist's kollektivhus empire

While most other developed European countries were focusing on rebuilding efforts following the ravages of successive World Wars, Sweden's position of relative unaffectedness allowed them to both provide their neighbours with the products their rebuilding efforts required, as well as think and act more expansively on domestic policy. Progressive housing policies found protagonists like Olle Engkvist (1889-1969) willing and able to deliver the daring new kollektivhus typology. Foremost a property developer, Engkvist also owned a construction company and felt a philanthropic duty to provide the quality housing for the masses that the Social Democrat Party desired. Over 30 years, his company proceeded to not only build a large number of kollektivhus (amongst many other projects), but also to then retain control of the day-to-day professionalised operations of cooking, cleaning and laundry through a maintenance shell company.

In many instances, the centralised facilities proved difficult to sustain economically, and when Engkvist died in 1969 the financial might and strength of will that had been propping them up disappeared, leaving kollektivhus in a state of crisis. Almost without exception, the buildings reverted to conventional formats of habitation and collectivised functions ceased to exist: it was the end of an era; the dream had officially ended.

²⁹ Vestbro, Dick Urban. Cohousing in Sweden, history and present situation (2014). Stockholm: Kollektivhus NU

4.6 Beginning of the end: demise of the welfare state and rise of neoliberal individualism

The harsh reality of the situation was that cracks had begun to appear in the structures of the welfare state across the continent, into which seeds of neoliberal capitalism were sown. Quietly, much of Sweden's existing housing stock had become outdated, and in a last hurrah the SDP announced a ten-year building project between 1965 and 1974 to deliver a million houses: *Miljonprogrammet* (Million Programme)³⁰. With striking similarities to the *plattenbau* construction of Eastern Germany in particular, the project delivered masses of repetitive housing in an incarnation of socialist ideology.

In a time when an increasing sense of individualism began proliferating in Western democracy, such a project was met with some scepticism: to the lone individual the dauntingly endless rows of homogenous façade must have seemed impenetrable. This consolidated the hiatus gripping more progressive collective housing – as well as political ideology as a whole – prompting a period of necessary re-evaluation of state interventionism and thus the relationship between the individual and the institution.



Figure 4f: Typical *Miljonprogrammet* housing

30 In these houses, the rational Frankfurt Kitchen-inspired *Svensk köksstandard* [Swedish kitchen standard] was installed, further evidencing state interest in collective efficiency.

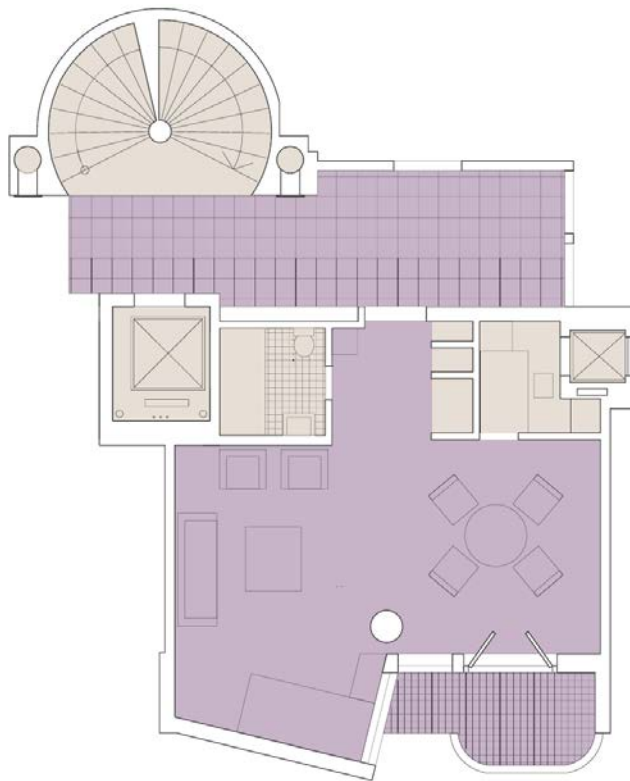


Figure 4b: *Kollektivhuset* (1935). Kitchen within apartments relegated to servant status in centre of plan.

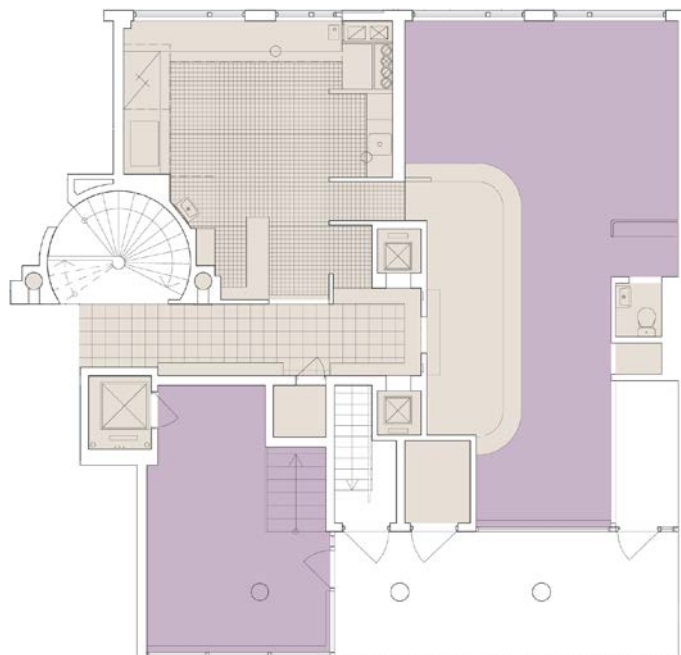


Figure 4c: *Kollektivhuset* (1935). Restaurant/bar as served space vs kitchen as servant space: divided by bar counter.

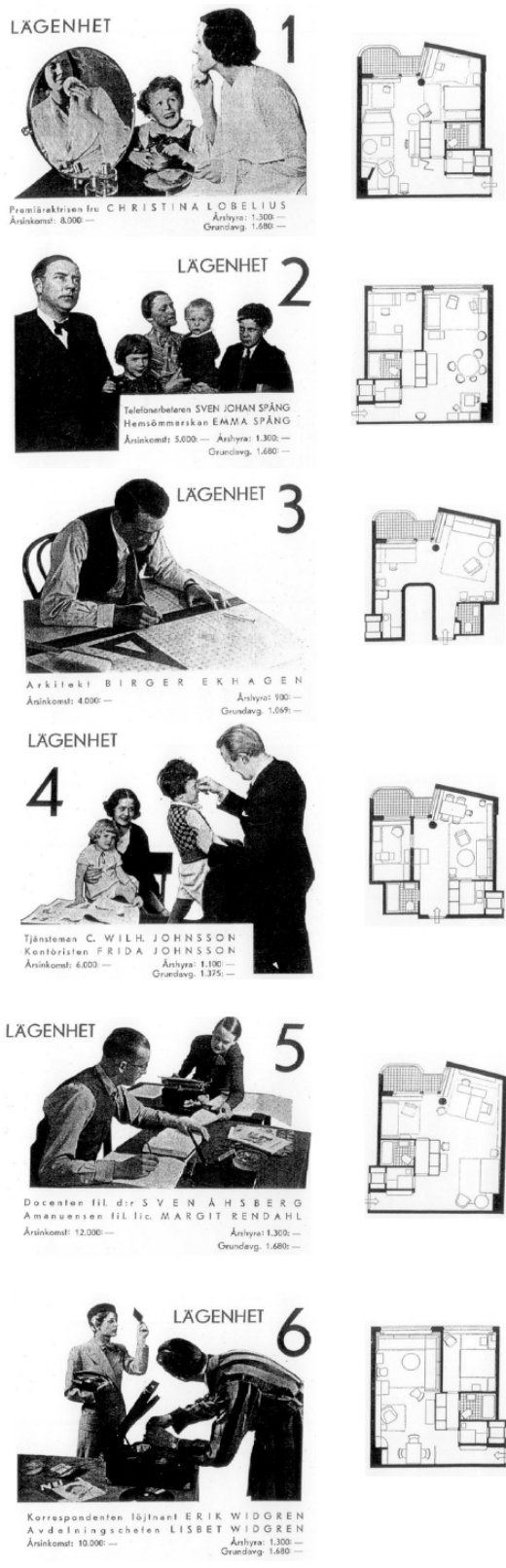


Figure 4d: Kollektivhuset (1935). Excerpt from catalogue showing similar but varied types including fictional future residents as hints to the type of neighbours one would have. Thoroughly middle class!

4.7 Sanitised domesticity and the diminishing appeal of no housework

Perhaps the biggest flaw in the basis of the first generation of kollektivhus was that it proposed an increased quality of life – and equality for women – by removing the necessities of cooking, cleaning and childcare. What it failed to recognise was that those tasks were not only enjoyable in moderation, but also that childcare in particular was one of the most rewarding (if challenging) aspects of life at home, and could form the basis of healthy domestic relationships.

Furthermore, the revived notion in the 1950s & 1960s of the kitchen as a social place which could now be open to the living area (courtesy of mechanically-ventilated stove hoods³¹) and the evolving sense of both cooking *and* eating together as a combined enactment of conviviality implied the potential for the resurrection of the kollektivhus project, as we shall see in the next chapter.



Figure 4g: Image from a 1950s catalogue for kitchen appliances

³¹ Patented in the USA by Theodore R.N. Gerdes (1926), the mechanically-ventilated cooker hood was mainstreamed in the 1950s.

5 2nd-generation kollektivhus & collaborative housing (1971-present)

5.1 Bo i Gemenskap (Living in Community): A practical but fun solution

Bo i Gemenskap (Living in Community) was a group of Swedish women formed in 1977 who wrote a cohesive and practical proposal for the reinvention of the kollektivhus typology entitled *Det lilla kollektivhuset: en modell för praktisk tillämpning* (The small collective house: a model for practical application)³². According to expert-in-the-field Dick Urban Vestbro (1940-):

“They belonged to the new generation of feminists who rejected the idea that housework should be reduced as much as possible. Instead, they maintained that much of this women's culture had a value in itself. Cooking, baking, sewing, child-rearing and other house-bound activities would be enjoyable if carried out together and would still be time-saving. When carrying out everyday chores together, a simple type of attractive togetherness is created, the group argued (Berg et al 1982). For the above purpose a unit of 20 to 50 apartments was recommended. The idea was that no employed staff would be required. The women's group could very well have established a housing unit of its own, but it did not want the model to be a special solution for the privileged, and therefore it was proposed that public housing companies should adopt the model. At a big housing exhibition in Stockholm 1980 the group presented the idea in the form of a small model house, and later they published a book (Berg et al 1982), which served as a blueprint for activists and housing companies who were ready to accept the model”³³

Dick Urban Vestbro



Figure 5a: 1979 Gothenburg Stacken rental tower – architect Lars Ågren lived there.

³² Berg, Elly; BiG group et al. *Det lilla kollektivhuset: en modell för praktisk tillämpning* [The small collective house: a model for practical application] (1982). Stockholm

³³ Vestbro, Dick Urban. *From Central kitchen to community co-operation - Development of Collective Housing in Sweden* (1992). Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology (KTH)

5.2 Counter-cultural resistance

It is probably fair to characterise the actions of BiG at the time as a kind of counter-culture, drawing inspiration from the hippy and communal movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. In interview in 2017, Kerstin Kärnekull (1942-) – an original member of the group as well as a trained architect – described the original re-imagining of kollektivhus as “a practical but fun solution” to the problem of being young mothers with careers to pursue. Mostly in their mid-thirties, they were relatively young and full of passion and ideas for new ways to do things. Set side by side with Scandinavian-inspired participative architecture by the likes of John Habraken and the Anglo-Swedish Ralph Erskine, the sentiment here was of anti-establishment yet democratic resistance.

5.3 Substance over style

The group were concerned with substance, rather than style. When an offshoot of the group finally managed to persuade a local housing association to build more or less according to their desires in 1993 at *Fardknappen* in the Sodermalm district of central Stockholm, the building itself was markedly post-modern in its exterior formal expression. Did this matter to the group? “Hardly,” remarks Kärnekull: “To be honest we were more concerned with making sure that we got what we wanted from the kinds of rooms and the position of the communal spaces. Of course, we didn’t get all of these things quite right – one always makes a mistake or two – but on the whole we are pretty satisfied with how it turned out. We wouldn’t have been inviting people from all over the world to see it if not!”³⁴.

Rather than the typical architect’s fascination with the object-building, the emphasis was on the communal processes and making sure that they had enough space for all of them to comfortably co-exist; the operation of the community was placed at the top of the list of design priorities.

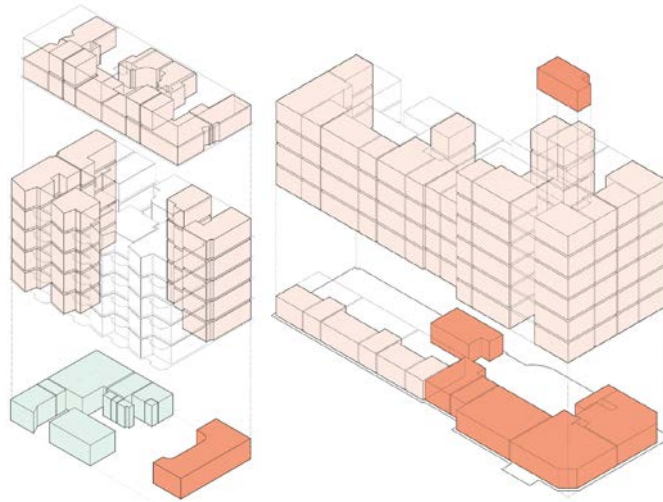


Figure 5b: Isometric of Kollektivhuset (left) and Fardknappen (right). Primary collaborative spaces shown in dark red.

³⁴ Interview of Kerstin Kärnekull (chairperson of Fardknappen resident’s association & original BiG group-member) by the author, December 2017.

5.4 Maximum leisure

In fact, by the time the group had managed to realise their fiction they were all considerably older, and the result of Fardknappen was a community 'for the second half of life' (50+). In this context the provision of leisure facilities became of paramount importance. After all, what else should the retired and semi-retired do with their free time?

The tendency of the second generation of kollektivhus to provide more and more leisure facilities - as opposed to introverted cells purely for rest - ties in closely with the broader progressive agendas for the 21st century. If the last century was the one in which we acquired the right to healthcare, housing and a 40-hour working week, this century is the one in which we campaign for a 30-hour working week and increased leisure privileges. In the case that they come to fruition and the general public do succeed in reaping the benefits of automation then collective housing truly will come into its own as a typology of the future, thereby fulfilling the prophecy and echoing the words of Gunnar Asplund et al in *acceptera* almost a century ago. *Accept! Towards cohousing is towards the future!*



Figure 5c: Collective workshop at Fardknappen

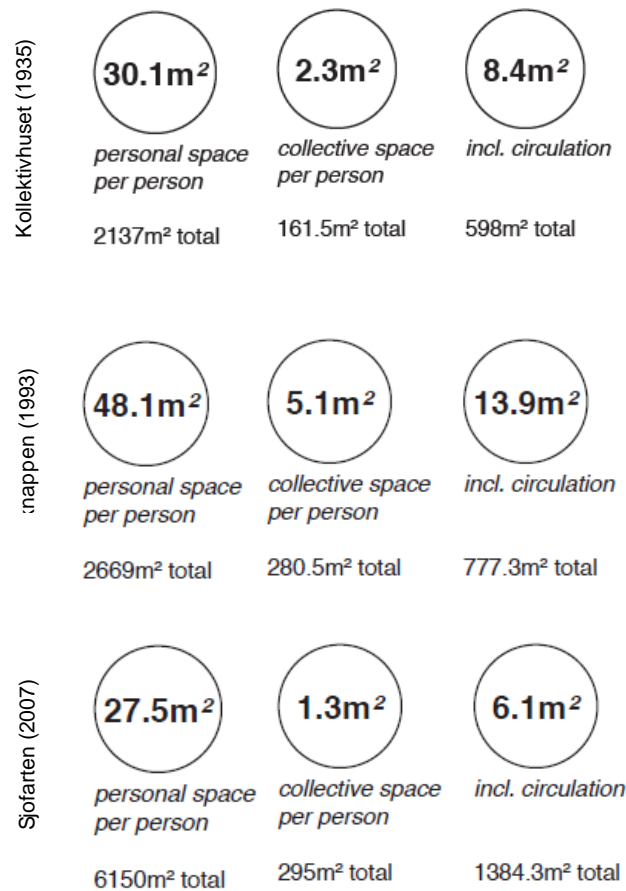


Figure 5d: Personal & collective area comparisons for case studies

5.5 Architecture is participation. Participation is community.

Perhaps obviously, key advocates of the current kollektivhus movement stress the importance of involving residents in the design process from an early stage. Community formation in such an intensive sharing environment is, they argue, nearly impossible without the real sense of ownership and control over their surroundings that comes with such participative design methods.

“...you can’t build houses like this [Fardknappen] if you don’t build the communities at the same time. The examples where kollektivhus’ have failed is when the government or housing associations failed to involve the future residents enough in the development of the project. They took a handful of people from their lengthy waiting lists - who had barely met before - and put them into buildings designed for communal living, expecting them to self-organise and share as if by magic. It was bound to fail from the very beginning. Out of the 19 examples from the 1980s and 90s around 6 didn’t make it as intended. The rest survive today.”

Kerstin Kärnekull

So, an increased sense of individual input seems to contribute to a more robust sense of collective identity. Combine this with the increased capacity for the pursuit of leisure and

one gets the sense that the modern-day pursuit of individualism might have the added benefit of providing an antidote to the loneliness that for the moment seems endemic in Western society³⁵.

5.6 Mainstreaming radical housing

The final kollektivhus example chosen for study was *Sjöfarten*, a cohousing scheme situated in a larger masterplan for the redevelopment of a former industrial area just to the south of Stockholm city centre. This scheme was chosen as an example of a contemporary effort which looks towards mainstreaming the collective housing concept. Planned for multiple generations including children, teenagers, adults, and the elderly, the level of sharing is designed to be less intensive due to the varying levels of free time available within the generations and their capacity for commitment to collective activities. In consideration of this factor, the collective facilities and corridor are located in one block, with a proportionally lower amount of collective space per person.

Through a more considered approach to external space – consolidated inflection towards the courtyard, changes in levels, thresholds, landscape treatments, and so on – it manages to maintain an atmosphere of collectivity whilst making more economical use of internal shared spaces.

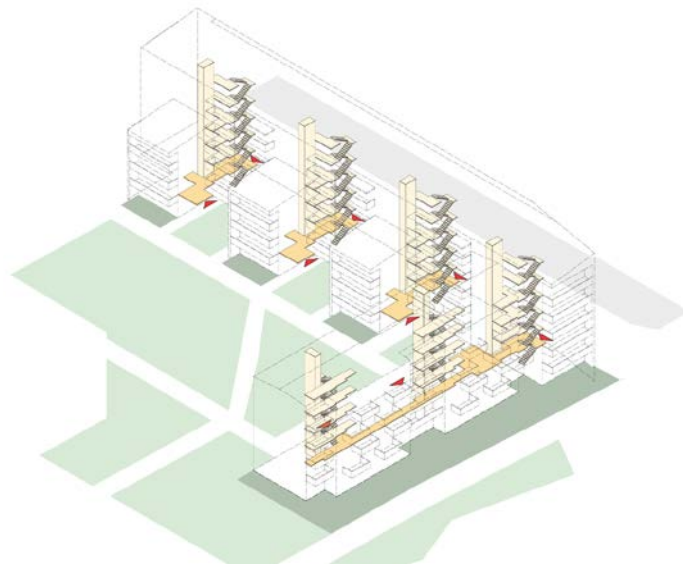


Figure 5e: Clustering of apartments around a carefully-landscaped courtyard

³⁵ Dykstra, Pearl A.; de Jong Gierveld, Jenny; Schenk, Niels. Living arrangements, intergenerational support types and older adult loneliness in Eastern and Western Europe; Demographic Research, Volume 27, Article 7 (August 2012). Rostock: Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research.

5.7 Design principles as embodied ideologies

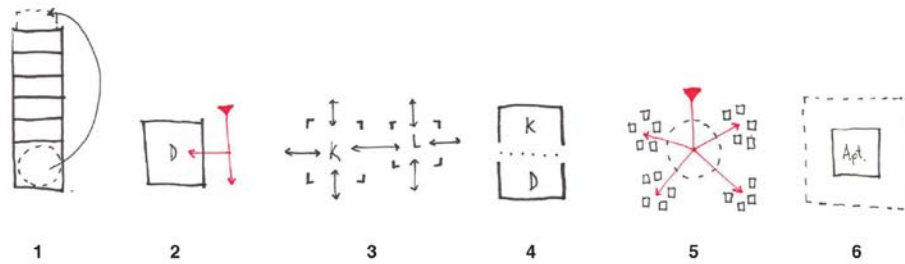


Figure 5f: Kollektivhus 'design principles'

By analysing a series of collective housing buildings, it becomes possible to extract from them a series of 'design principles' which describe their organisation and unite them as a set of objects.

These principles are:

1. Collective facilities are centralised and generally located on the ground floor.
2. The dining room in particular is always located close to the main entrance.
3. The kitchen and laundry are seen as important collaborative spaces and as such have prominent, connected, and visible locations.
4. Crucially, the threshold between dining room and kitchen always allows for connection.
5. Circulation systems have a variable level of connectedness which allows for hierarchy and clustering, but always have an identifiable main entrance.
6. Personal spaces are condensed to a minimum: bedroom, bathroom, living/dining/kitchen.

From the observation of objects, it is possible to make certain inferences regarding their design intentions for the communities that they house. For instance, the proximity of the dining room to the main entrance earmarks it as the new social heart of the collective building. Furthermore, the ability to connect the kitchen and dining spaces implies a flattened hierarchy between those performing domestic labour and those benefitting from it. And lastly, the reduction of the personal dwelling to the benefit of the shared spaces signals a prioritisation of the collective over the individual. Inferences from such design principles can be drawn for each of these collective housing examples in turn, and their validity is not diminished by their derivative position in relation to the community itself. Indeed, what gives these observations such weight is that they are derived from design decisions made democratically with the participation of residents that have actually lived in these buildings over several decades, constituting a strongly-defined and identifiable movement; namely the second generation of kollektivhus.

However, as has been presented, discussed and argued in this essay, the truly generative principles for kollektivhus are the ideological ones, producing fictions which then in turn give rise to built form. The object-building is a result which the architect helps to produce, but the more important productive role of the architect is that synthesis of zeitgeist: the fiction of the inhabitants.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Architect as *scenius*

In the introduction it was argued that the architect's main – and often overlooked – responsibility is to channel the zeitgeist into the delivery of form. This action is facilitated by the writing of fictions which must capture the hopes, dreams and desires for the day-to-day life of citizens. These fictions are written in collaboration with a selection of agents of change who are permitted to determine the popular narrative.

Up until the 1970s, accessibility to the metaphorical pen was restricted to the educated and moneyed privilege, resulting in a catalogue of failures (Fourier's *familistère*, Braun's *einküchenhaus*, Markelius' *kollektivhuset*) to interpret the desires of the many due to an imposed dictation of disconnected predictions from the few.

“I came up with this word “scenius” – and scenius is the intelligence of a whole... operation or group of people. And I think that's a more useful way to think about culture, actually. I think that – let's forget the idea of “genius” for a little while, let's think about the whole ecology of ideas that give rise to good new thoughts and good new work.”³⁶

Brian Eno

When the introduction of participative design re-evaluated the basis for the design of buildings, it made possible a direct connection between end-user requirements and their prospective domestic habits. The architect as *scenius* seems particularly apt, tasked with setting the scene for inhabitants to write their own fictions and providing them with the tools necessary to construct their own story.

What this research has shown is that in order to successfully enrich and enable the most positive qualities of humanity, the architectural profession must strive to broaden the gateway to fictional contributions. Without a studied commitment to listening as well as speaking, the spatial inventiveness with which architects are educated can all-too-easily result in thoughtless delivery of empty, spiritless shells. Through recognising the proficiency of end-users as experts in dwelling, active and inclusive collaboration can produce social constructions which perform above and beyond any reasonable expectation of conventionally-procured buildings in both their longevity and enhancement of the pleasurable qualities of life.

6.2 The evolving image of the ideal collective house

In summary,

- Chapter 2 (1820-1900): Hedonistic palace
- Chapters 3 & 4 (1901-1970): Efficient feminist liberation device
- Chapter 5 (1931-1970): DIY community-led mutual home

6.3 The contribution of architects to the history of kollektivhus evolution

Historical research and field trip findings show the contributions of architects to the development of kollektivhus have been as follows:

- A. To develop the implications for industrial manufacture on the home
- B. To introduce the notion of beauty in an attempt to elevate the base level of civilisation
- C. To directly translate end-user desires into adaptation of ideal forms

By:

- D. Referencing the thoughts and images of artists and thinkers
- E. Synthesising the zeitgeist in published manifestoes
- F. Taking the initiative and instigating projects
- G. Living in their own schemes
- H. Designing buildings that people actually want to live in

6.3 Hard-working domestic elegance through utilitarian reading of beauty

The changing perception of collaboration at home has contributed to an altered sense of what can be understood to constitute a truly harmonious domestic life. Significantly, the intertwining of utility and beauty in the manifestoes of functionalism have carried through to a pragmatism in daily life that has helped us to appreciate the down-to-earth grace and satisfaction of working together towards a common goal. Louis Kahn famously categorised built spaces as either *served* or *servant*. The key development for the home in this century has been the inversion of these terms in the case of the kitchen and the laundry, choosing instead to celebrate the performance of labour as an enjoyable aspect of homeliness.

The Italian term *sprezzatura* refers to the effortless elegance with which a swan appears to move as it glides across a lake or river, whilst webbed feet powerfully propel forwards, unseen under the water's surface. Sprezzatura's architectural counterpart in the bourgeois serviced house died something of a death in the changing labour conditions of the developed Western economy. Cohousing, on the other hand, stands as an epitome of collaboration; an altogether different class of elegance that takes pride in the collective art of homecraft and its hallmarks, rather than hiding it away. This pride in ownership of one's tasks as opposed to one's objects reflects the emergence of the sharing economy and the associated recognition that value lies not in the material object, but instead in the immaterial enactment of process. In a bizarre twist, late capitalism has echoed socialism in its suggestion to unburden the individual of ownership, leaving them instead to focus on the act of living.

6.4 Efficiency for generosity, not austerity

The over-riding reason for the abject failure of the first generation of kollektivhus was that it failed to recognise the ability of end-users to more effectively identify their needs than the operational institutions themselves.

As one result of this systematic error, end-users rejected the reduction in personal living area (and subsequent lack of pro-rata re-allocation of space to collective facilities). While there remain efficiencies of scale to be gained from sharing in housing

typologies, the lesson from kollektivhus in Stockholm brings to mind the old adage: ‘You don’t get something for nothing!’. Bearing in mind that – for the moment – the applicable demographic for cohousing remains thoroughly middle-class, there is a certain level of expectation regarding what is considered an acceptable level of amenity and space standard.

In concrete terms, this saw the provision of collective space per capita almost double between the case studies of 1935 and 1993, while personal space per capita also increased in size³⁷. Nonetheless, as the practice continues to move towards mainstreaming, contemporary multi-family examples such as Sjöfarten (2007) demonstrate that by taking a more considered approach to the relationship with external space, more efficient internal space ratios per capita *can* be achieved across the board without austere side-effects, remaining within the core principles of kollektivhus’ constitution.

6.4 Self-discovery through collective housing reform

Walter Benjamin envisioned the interior of the home as a metaphorical velvet-lined case designed to accommodate its inhabitant - a cushioned envelope bearing all the characteristics of its owner, both good and bad. The home for him was a negative form of the human itself, and perhaps that cuts right to the core of why as a species we are so fascinated with the form and appearance of our homes: because over time we shape them, at the same time as they shape us. The evolution of the ideal home is the evolution of man himself.

To conclude, the truth is that there are, in reality, a plurality of truths. Each of these ‘truths’ are actually fictions that are more or less truthful for every one of us in turn: what constitutes one person’s dream is nothing short of another’s nightmare. The might of the most powerful utopias lies in the ability to touch something in all of us; in the capacity to form collectiveness in the face of innumerable individualities. In an era of new radical changes in working habits in addition to a new public health crisis of unprecedented loneliness, this is what makes the prospect of cohousing so captivating: that in forming a post-familial network of relations we might ultimately discover our own identity; that which makes us truly human.

³⁷ See figure 5f.



Figure 6a: *Interior of Apartment 7, Stockholm Exhibition (1930) by Sven Markelius*

7 Appendices

7.1 Useful Definitions

<i>apart-hotel</i>	serviced apartment typology made popular in early 20 th C New York
<i>baugruppen</i>	the German model of private collective building commissioning
<i>collaborative consumption</i>	TBC
<i>collaborative housing</i>	way of living in which a collective of people share common spaces and often distribute housekeeping tasks to cater for one another's schedules, skills and preferences; thus naturally eliciting a strong sense of community.
<i>collective</i>	a group of entities that share or are motivated by at least one common issue or interest, or work together to achieve a common objective
<i>collective housing</i>	building (or set of buildings) in which multiple households take residence
<i>collectief particulierprivate opdrachtgeverschap (CPO)</i>	collective building commissioning in Holland
<i>commensality</i>	eating and drinking at the same table. from the Latin 'commensalis': 'com' for together and 'mensa' meaning table
<i>conviviality</i>	autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment...individual freedom realised in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value
<i>domesticity</i>	home or family life.
<i>housing co-operative</i>	a jointly-owned membership-based enterprise which owns real estate in which each member is entitled to the residence of one unit. This is managed either in part or entirely by the members. Some advantages may include: pooling of member's resources for increased financial leverage; stable rent; stronger-than-usual tenancy rights, and control over entry of new members
<i>labour</i>	work, especially physical work
<i>perceived density</i>	TBC
<i>social value</i>	process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment.

<i>social capital</i>	trust, concerns for one's associates, a willingness to live by the norms of one's community and to punish those who do not.
<i>socialism</i>	a political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole.
<i>sprezzatura</i>	studied carelessness, especially as a characteristic quality or style of art or literature.

7.2 Literature Review

Categories:

- Primary source of kollektivhus knowledge derived from series of papers by Dick Urban Vestbro, English articles written 2000-present (original Swedish paper written 1979)
- Broader review of cohousing articles by academic community including seminal text by Dorit Fromm
- Literature dealing with architectural building analysis (Anatomical Review of Collective Housing)
- History of domestic labour & gender equality at home (Hayden Dolores; Grand Domestic Revolution, Catherine Beecher; American Woman's Home etc.)
- History of housing reform in European centres (reports on 19th C urban living conditions)
- Architectural critiques and manifestos (Acceptera, Tools for Conviviality, Kitchenless City etc)
- Swedish history articles
- Co-design toolsets

Groupings:

- Documents which describe key drivers for housing reform
- Manifestos which propose revision for housing reform
- Toolsets for architects/designers
- Additional contextual history (Sweden)

7.3 Bibliography

Åhrén, Uno; Asplund, Gunnar; Gahn, Wolter; Markelius, Sven; and Sundahl, Eskil. *acceptera* (1932). Stockholm: Tidens.

Alexander, Christopher. *A Pattern Language* (1977). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aureli, Pier Vittorio & Tattara, Martina. *Production/Reproduction: Housing beyond the Family* (2016). Cambridge, MA: Harvard GSD.

Beecher, Catherine Edwards. *The American Woman's Home* (1869). New York: J. B. Ford & Co.

Berg, Elly; BiG group et al. *Det lilla kollektivhuset: en modell för praktisk tillämpning [The small collective house: a model for practical application]* (1982). Stockholm

Boschma, Ron A.; Kloosterman, Robert C. *Learning from clusters: A critical assessment from an economic-geographical perspective* (2005). Dordrecht: Springer.

Bowles, Samuel; Gintis, Herbert. *Social Capital and Community Governance* (2001). Amherst: University of Massachusetts.

Bridgman, Benjamin; Dugan, Andrew; Lal, Mikhael; Osborne, Matthew; Villones, Shaunda. Accounting for Household Production in the National Accounts, 1965–2010 (May 2012).

Chadwick; Edwin, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population and on the Means of It's Improvement* (1842). London: H. M. Stationery.

Dykstra, Pearl. *Ellen Key: Motherhood for society* (1983); Atlantis Vol. 9 No. 1. Halifax: Atlantis.

Federici, Silvia. *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction & Feminist Struggle* (2012). New York: PM Press.

Engels, Friedrich. *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England [Condition of the Working Class in England]* (1845). Leipzig: Otto Wigand.

Fernandez Per, Aurora; Mozas, Javier; Ollero, Alex S. *10 Stories of Collective Housing* (2013). Vitoria-Gasteiz: a+t architectural publishers

Fromm, Dorit. *Collaborative Communities: Cohousing, Central Living, and other new forms of housing with shared facilities* (1991). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

- Fromm, Dorit. *Seeding Community: Collaborative Housing as a Strategy for Social and Neighbourhood Repair* (2012); *Built Environment*, Vol. 38, No. 3. Marcham: Alexandrine Press.
- de Graaf, Reinier. *With the Masses* (July/August 2016). London: *Architectural Review*.
- Gaines, David. *Review of 'Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain by Edwin Chadwick'* (1967); *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 2. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. p 226.
- Greater London Authority [GLA], *Lessons from Higher Density Development* (September 2016). London: GLA.
- Harrison, Molly. *The Kitchen in History* (1972). Oxford: Osprey Publishing.
- Hayden, Dolores. *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1981). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hofmann, Susanne. *Architecture is Participation: Die Baupiloten Methods and Projects* (2014). Berlin: Jovis.
- Horelli, Liisa. *The role of shared space for the building and maintenance of community from the gender perspective - a longitudinal case study in a neighbourhood of Helsinki* (2013). Helsinki: Social Sciences Directory.
- Illich, Ivan. *Tools for Conviviality* (1973). London: Marion Boyars Publishers.
- Jaschke, Karin. *City Is House and House Is City: Aldo van Eyck, Piet Blom and the Architecture of Homecoming* (2008). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jurgenhake, Brigit. *Connecting Inside and Outside in Time-Based Dwelling*; *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, Vol.19, No. 3 (2006). Blindern: SINTEF Academic Press.
- Killock, John. *Is cohousing a suitable typology for an ageing population in the UK?* (2014). London: RIBA Publishing.
- Kries, Mateo et al. *Together! The New Architecture of the Collective* (2017). Berlin: Ruby Press/Vitra Design Museum.
- Kurz, Daniel. *Collective Forms of Living* (2015) Basel: Birkhauser.

Larsen, Lars Bang. *Giraffe and Anti-Giraffe: Charles Fourier's Artistic Thinking*. e-flux Journal [Internet]. June 2011 [cited October 2018]; #26. Available from: <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/26/67951/giraffe-and-anti-giraffe-charles-fourier-s-artistic-thinking/>

Latour; Bruno: *Reassembling the Social* (2005). Oxford: Oxford University Press. p4

Lee, Sangdon. *The Commune Movement during the 1960s and the 1970s in Britain, Denmark and the United States* (2016). Leeds: University of Leeds Press.

Lietaert, Matthieu. *The Growth of Cohousing in Europe*. (December 2007). Referenced October 2018. Available from: <https://www.cohousing.org/node/1537>

Maak, Niklas. *Living Complex: From Zombie City to the New Communal* (2015). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Maki, Fumihiko. *Investigations in collective form* (1964). Washington: Washington School of Architecture

Miller Lane, Barbara. *An Introduction to Ellen Key's "Beauty in the Home"* (2008). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (MOMA).

Mclaren, Duncan & Agyeman, Julia. *Sharing Cities: A Case for Truly Smart and Sustainable Cities* (2017). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Nelson, Suzy & Bobbins, Kerry. *Designing Cities: A study of collaborative interdisciplinary practice in the London area* (May 2017). London: University of Westminster.

Niedderer, Kristina. *Designing Mindful Interaction: The Category of Performative Object* (Winter 2007); Design Issues 23. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Patti, Daniela; Ployak, Levente. *Funding the Cooperative City: Community Finance and the Economy of Civic Spaces* (2017). Vienna: Co-operative City Books.

Paulsson, Gregor. *Better Things for Everyday Life* (1919). Stockholm.

Puigjaner, Anna. *Kitchenless City* (2017). Cambridge, MA. Harvard GSD.

P.M., *"The Power of Neighbourhood" and The Commons* (2014). Zurich: Self-published.

Rooij, Remon & Frank, Andrea I. *Educating spatial planners for the age of cocreation: the need to risk community, science and practice involvement in planning programmes and curricula* (2016). Abingdon: Routledge.

Rygh, Karianne; De Vos, Marie; Raijmakers, Bos. *Value Pursuit: Creating value between stakeholders in policy development* (2015). Eindhoven: Design Academy Eindhoven.

Sullivan, Louis. *The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered* (1896). Lippincott's Magazine (March 1896): 403–409.

Teige, Karel. *The Minimum Dwelling* (2002, English – originally 1932, Czech). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

The Stockholm Regional Planning Office. *1966 Stockholm Plan* (1968). Stockholm: The Stockholm Regional Planning Office.

Tummers, Lidewij. *The re-emergence of self-managed co-housing in Europe: A critical review of co-housing research* (2016). Delft: TU Delft.

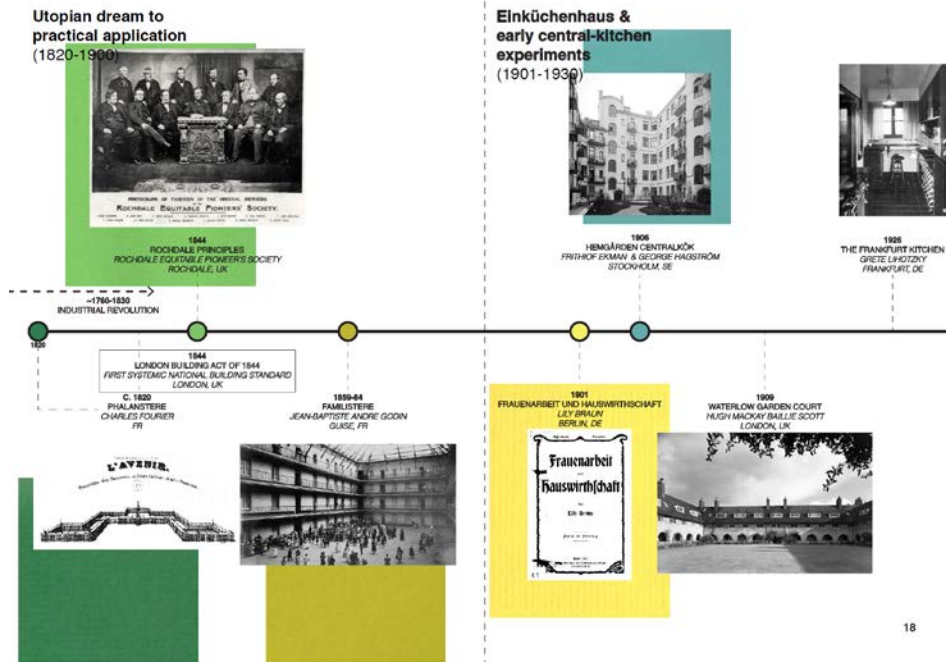
Tummers, Lidewij. *Learning from co-housing initiatives: Between Passivhaus engineers and active inhabitants* (2017). Delft: TU Delft.

Vestbro, Dick Urban. *Saving by Sharing – Collective Housing for Sustainable Lifestyles in the Swedish Context* (2012). Venice: Degrowth Conference Venice 2012.

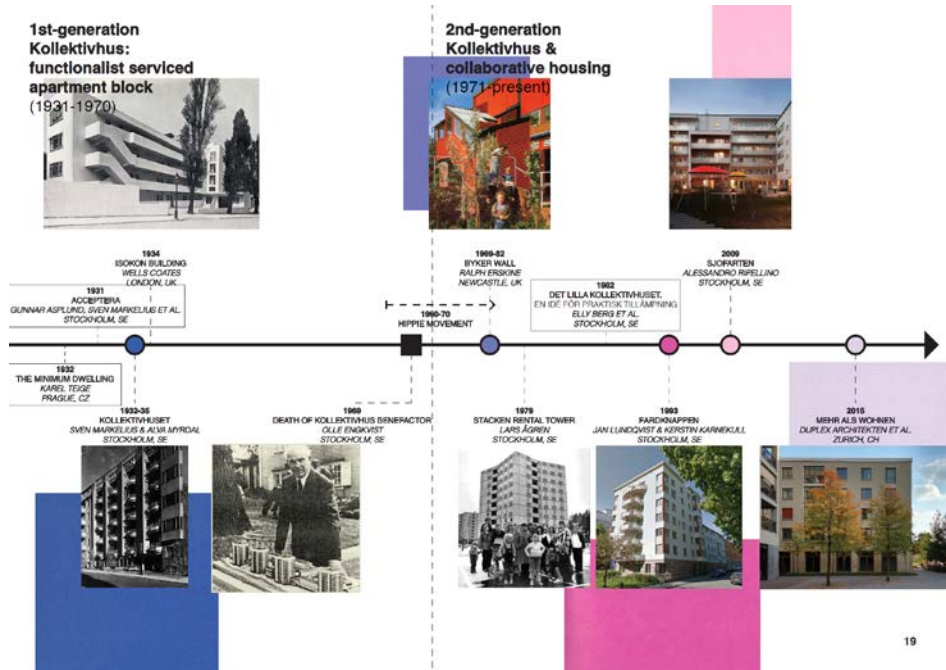
Vestbro, Dick Urban. *From Collective Housing to Cohousing – A Summary of Research* (2000). Michigan: Locke Science Publishing Company.

Vestbro, Dick Urban. *From Central kitchen to community co-operation - Development of Collective Housing in Sweden* (1992). Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology (KTH)

7.4 Timeline



18



19

7.5 Interviews

Kerstin Kärnekull

Stockholm



Färdknappen Cohousing
Resident & Chairperson

Kerstin Elisabet Kärnekull, born 1942 in Flen, is a Swedish architect.

She graduated from the Royal Institute of Technology in 1967, and was employed in various positions including at the Swedish Architectural Association and as head of the education company BFAB (Construction and Real Estate Sector Education Institute AB). She has been a board member of the Architecture Museum and member of Taby City Council (Left Party).

She is now head of the national Kollektivhus association, and resident at a prominent example of elder cohousing, which she promotes and champions as part of her international contact with interested parties.

"You can't build houses like this if you don't build the communities at the same time..."

1. Why do you think cohousing has found fertile ground in Sweden?

There was a large discussion in the 1930s about the functionalist successes in Germany, Austria etc. Combined with that the feminist movement gained great prominence, and you would say that probably these were most important in the development of the Kollektivhus, though it couldn't have happened without government subsidy and strong characters pushing it forward.

Furthermore, there was a back & forth relationship with developments in Copenhagen, particularly in the 1960s & 70s: we were looking at them, they were looking at us. It's difficult to say who did what first, but that conversation was certainly vital.

As a group of women aged 40-45 we [Bo i Gemenskap] we were busy being mothers, busy being professionals, busy writing books - busy with life! What we wanted was a practical but fun solution to help us live our lives with a bit more time for ourselves, or at least to not have to struggle in isolation. Ironically our work establishing, promoting and maintaining the group took a lot of effort, though it did make us happy!

2. In your opinion, is the house/building intrinsic to the qualities of the community?

Without a doubt: you can't build houses like this [Färdknappen] if you don't build the communities at the same time. The examples where Kollektivhus' have failed is when the government or housing associations failed to involve the future residents enough in the development of the project. They took a handful of people from their lengthy waiting lists - who had barely met before - and put them into buildings designed for communal living, expecting them to self-organise and share as if by magic. It was bound to fail from the very beginning. Out of the 19 examples from the 1980s and 90s around 6 didn't make it as intended. The rest survive today.

3. In your experience, has gender equality played a role in your community/design process?

As mentioned before we started out with a quite feminist agenda. However what we wanted was parity and equal recognition [not domination], so once we'd achieved that in our own environments it became more about how you work together. Here at Färdknappen we share tasks equally, though of course some prefer some kinds of tasks to others. That being said it's not unusual to see a man using a sewing machine and a woman taking out the rubbish!

4. How does your community/design/practice relate to politics & institutions?

In general we've tried to avoid being particularly political in our work as it tends to be one of those things that really polarises opinions and thus people so when you're trying to convince everyone that's not great! It also isn't very helpful when some of the most important people you're trying to convince are politicians. Nonetheless it's difficult to deny that as a group we are on the whole - a little leaning towards the left...though there will always be dissidents! 'chuckles'

Additional remarks:

It's particularly relevant in the history of Swedish collective housing to note that paid labour and voluntary labour doesn't mix that well - it's what led to the downfall of the original examples from the 1930s-70s when certain services (particularly cooking) didn't meet expectations. Also with childcare, sometimes using professionals and other times relying on parents can lead to clashes.

82

Gunilla Lundahl

Stockholm



Mariebergs Kollektivhus
Resident & Board Member

Gunilla Lundahl is a semi-retired journalist, art and architecture critic, editor and teacher. From 1966 to '71 she was the editor of Arkitekten Tidningen (AT), Sweden's oldest architectural magazine, established in 1901. In 1992 she co-authored the book 15 collective houses, Building Research Council (1992). Alongside these duties she has taught in various Art and Design schools in Sweden. From the early 1970s she has been living at Mariebergs Kollektivhus, where she maintains an active position as a member of the resident's association.

"As a young woman with children living in Mariebergs, it was such a privilege to be able to drop them off at the nursery downstairs in the morning, then return to the apartment...or head out to go about my daily tasks - yes, that really was rather wonderful..."

1. Why do you think cohousing has found fertile ground in Sweden?

In the case of Mariebergs Kollektivhus - and many others - it was the passion and dedication of Olle Engkvist that drove the movement forward. Olle owned a construction company that he used to build a number of Kollektivhus examples, as well as maintaining a heavy interest in the running of the building and it's services (central kitchen, cleaning etc.) well afterwards. In turn it was his death that meant a large number of collective services in buildings (including Mariebergs) being discontinued, effectively and irreversibly ending the nature of the communities there as was.

As a private provider, he was not an overtly political man, though he certainly had a good relationship with the Social Democratic Party, and his activities as a builder were helped by the strength of the party during his life and career as a builder.

2. In your opinion, is the house/building intrinsic to the qualities of the community?

In some ways...when the children go to school from a young age and have their friends in the same building; when you as a parent know their parents and you all eat together in the same room, that gave such memories that I don't think can be separated from the building.

The other people at Mariebergs that also attended the communal meals you felt like you knew well enough to stop if you saw them around town and say a few words. Not necessarily good friends as such, but people you had time for.

3. In your experience, has gender equality played a role in your community/design process?

As a young woman with children living in Mariebergs, it was such a privilege to be able to drop them off at the nursery downstairs in the morning, then return to the apartment to pick up my writing - or head out to go about my daily tasks - yes, that really was rather wonderful...and ultimately gave me the time to pursue my own career as well as being a mother. It was a big step towards equality, although you have to remember that at the time nurseries in Stockholm were a rarity so for the majority of women the life we had wasn't even vaguely an option. Obviously things are better now than they were, but there's always room for improvement.

4. How does your community relate to politics & institutions?

It doesn't, really. It wasn't necessarily an aspect that was discussed at great length in the dining room or even amongst the members of the board. When we meet to talk about what we should be doing as a community it's based on the what's best for us as a whole, as a residents, not some bigger agenda. Then again, the leader of the communist party in Sweden did live here at one point...

Additional remarks:

Although the communal aspect was important, it also wasn't necessary to always participate: the meals you could take to your own apartment to eat, and the apartments themselves had their own kitchens and were big enough to not feel cramped in without using the common areas. I think that was definitely beneficial, and welcome at times.

83

Stig Dedering

Stockholm



Hässelby Familjehotell
Resident & Collective Member

Stig Dedering, born 1941, studied architecture at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. He has worked with housing in different forms: design, planning, investigations, development and administration. He has lived in Hässelby Familjehotell since 1970.

“It [the building] certainly isn't ideal for our current community, though the generosity of the original design means there is still flexibility and lasting beneficial qualities”

1. Why do you think cohousing has found fertile ground in Sweden?

Probably in some way it relates to the pragmatic yet social way of Swedish thinking: it makes sense to share certain things from a practical view, and if you meet some people along the way, all the better.

The Kollektivhus or Familjehotell model is definitely not one size fits all, and at the time when I moved in (1969), an apartment at Hässelby Familjehotell cost significantly more than in the surrounding area. Consequently the whole building and its residents were much more middle class, even a bit bourgeois, you could argue - having your meals served to you day in day out wasn't the normal thing that people did.

Things have changed quite a bit now, particularly since de-collectivisation of most of the building in 1976. I think it was always quite a long way from the centre, and once the promises of a thriving suburb with its own centre didn't quite come off a lot of people moved closer to Stockholm.

There remains a group of around 50 of us - sometimes more, sometimes less - that have kept up the habit of eating together since, but cooking for ourselves instead of paying for someone else to do it. When you consider the size of the building overall, this isn't many people at all, and it can feel a bit empty at times with the generously sized corridors and so on. It's quite difficult also to find new members to join...a lot of new residents are immigrants and new to Swedish customs and so on, but we're making some progress...

2. In your opinion, is the house/building intrinsic to the qualities of the community?

Since its completion in 1955 there have been a lot of changes to the way the building was originally used, not all for the better: the nursery stopped using the shared corridor, which used to be nice; the large and quite grand communal dining room is now also part of the nursery meaning that we use a room that used to be a kind of foyer, plus some other rooms that have been converted into our kitchen and a kind of living room. It certainly isn't ideal for our current community, though the generosity of the original design means there is still flexibility and lasting beneficial qualities.

3. In your experience, has gender equality played a role in your community/design process?

In the original movement it was a lot about empowering women, recognising their work raising children and maintaining the household and so on...nowadays in our community there are actually a lot more women than men: they live longer and are generally a little more sociable as people. It can be interesting at times as a man here...let's just say everybody has their own role!

4. How does your community/design/practice relate to politics & institutions?

In general we are left-centre politically; one person used to be a member of the Social Democrats. But we're allowed to be here and use those rooms without extra cost by the private owner, a woman called Wonna I de Jong-Schaefer. She has a great interest in what we're doing here and often comes in to talk with us. I don't think she would actually live here, but we appreciate her support greatly.

84

Gunnar Akner

Stockholm



Kollektivhuset (John Ericssonsgatan 6)
Chairperson

Gunnar Akner (MD, PhD) is a Professor in Geriatric Medicine at Linneus University, Associate professor in Geriatric Medicine at Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm as well as a practicing Senior Physician. He is the chairperson for the board of residents & owners at Sven Markelius' Kollektivhuset, having undertaken the full restoration of the building to heritage standards following its listing as a national monument.

“There was a rather good saying from the time that is very descriptive both of the political ideas of the time and of what they were trying to do here, which is: 'Individual culture through collective technique'. I like this saying a lot, actually.

1. Why do you think cohousing has found fertile ground in Sweden?

Folkhemmet (the people's home) is a word associated with the Social Democratic Party, and the long period from 1932-1976 when they were in power. It basically refers to the welfare state, though they were quite good at using private companies to do common good. The basic concept is that the entire society ought to be like a small family, where everybody contributes.

Per Albin Hansson introduced the idea in the 1920s, saying that Sweden should become more like a "good home" with more equality and mutual understanding. There was another rather good saying from the time that is very descriptive both of the political ideas of the time and of what they were trying to do here which is: 'Individual culture through collective technique'. I like this saying a lot, actually.

2. In your opinion, is the house/building intrinsic to the qualities of the community?

There was certainly a lot of thought put into the design of Kollektivhuset on how a community should be. Sven Markelius was a very prominent architect and put on a whole exhibition about the building at the Liljevalks Museum. Alva Myrdal was also a good friend of Markelius and her ideas on economics and sociology influenced him a lot, I think. She was supposed to live here originally, although in the end she and her husband Gunnar had children and instead commissioned a house by Markelius in the suburbs of Stockholm.

Particularly in the childcare facilities there was an interest in child psychology (to the extent that there was originally a large one-way mirror through which the children could be observed), and there was a whole pedagogical theory around the four elements that we had to reinstate when we restored the building in 1990.

Despite the faithful restoration, the building has inevitably changed a lot over the years. Perhaps the biggest changes are that of the ownership structure, which is now condominium as opposed to co-operative, and the de-collectivisation of the restaurant. At one point there were 22 members of service staff fulfilling various roles. Now the restaurant is privately owned, although the dumb waiters still work.

3. In your experience, has gender equality played a role in your community/design process?

In the past it was a big part of the ideology...now, not so much.

4. How does your community relate to politics & institutions?

The amount of time and money that has been necessary to properly renovate the building has meant that the prices of the apartments has had to increase accordingly, so out of necessity we're on the whole an educated group with an interest in architecture and heritage. This isn't politics as such, though we have had lots of conversations with local planning authorities. Also, the building itself is (or was) quite a political statement in many ways, and the building is something that we have obviously bought into.

85

Neil Rodgers

London



*Herley Halebrown Morrison Architects
Associate*

Neil Rodgers graduated from Hull School of Architecture in 2003 before moving to Westminster University to continue his architectural education, graduating in 2006. Before joining Herley Halebrown, Neil worked in a number of practices where he was involved in a diverse array of projects and sectors including residential, arts and education buildings. Notably Neil was project architect for the award-winning Copper Lane Cohousing.

"Interestingly enough one of the most involved clients who was adamant that she'd 'have to be taken out of the building feet first' is now selling her property, for significantly more than was paid for it... I guess it just goes to show that you can never predict exactly how things will change..."

1. Why do you think cohousing hasn't found fertile ground in the UK?

I suppose there's always been a bit of an English 'king of my castle' culture where everybody wants to own their own home; the kind of suburban dream of having a detached house with its own garden. That idea of what people want has pretty directly resulted in a lot of the bizarre examples of volume built housing estates and their crazy amounts of fencing and dead space etc.

At the same time that is beginning to change, particularly now it's becoming more apparent that the majority of people now probably won't be able to own their homes. And we're looking at other places where people have managed to share successfully - like Denmark and Holland maybe - and seeing quite a few schemes being realised with more in the pipeline.

2. In your opinion, is the house/building intrinsic to the qualities of the community?

In the case of Copper Lane I'd definitely say that the process of consulting and designing with the clients brought them closer to each other and gave a good amount of emotional (as well as the obvious financial) investment in the project. Interestingly enough one of the most involved clients who was adamant that she'd 'have to be taken out of the building feet first' is now selling her property, for significantly more than was paid for it. The average build cost was around £300,000, while because of the type of property, community aspects and location it's now on the market for closer to £1.4m! Obviously that means it will be in at least some ways a different kind of person/family that moves in. I guess it just goes to show that you can never predict exactly how things will change...

The group never wanted to be seen as a closed-gated community as such, or as a commune even; more as close neighbours. They've been really good at getting involved with local groups and ventures, letting them use the shared hall for everything from yoga to creche and theatre classes. Because of the residential land use designation they're not allowed to take any money for hiring it out, which would count as a commercial venture...so they're sort of legally obliged to be benevolent! Maybe that's a bit of what being a community is about anyway; trading favours for favours rather than having to pay for everything with money.

3. In your experience, has gender equality played a role in your community/design process?

From the outset it was definitely a part of the project - we had several single mothers who saw the benefit in having a shared place where their kids could hang out, take it in turns keeping an eye out for them and so on. In fact there's a nice quote from Bertrand Russell in 1935 where he described how "each house is a centre of individual life, the communal life being represented by the office, the factory, or the mine", essentially referring to the housewife too busy with housework to get a job, relying on her husband to go out and earn for the family. In the end the project took so long that by the time it was finished several of the kids had left home or were old enough to not be around all the time. Again, that's life I guess.

4. How does your community/design/practice relate to politics & institutions?

As a practice we obviously have an interest in these kind of social issues or we probably wouldn't have taken on a job for a small project on a really difficult ex-industrial site. It hasn't helped us get any more of that kind of work though, despite the press, and you have to wonder if there's more that can be done to join up the dots. During the project there was mild support from the planning authority, but in the end they were more concerned with regulations daylighting, overlooking etc. And particularly with the new set of space standards for London it's going to be even more difficult to do anything non-standard.

86

Sam McDermott

London



*Karakusevic Carson Architects
Associate*

Sam has extensive experience working with Local Authorities and residents, and tackling challenging sites across London. He is currently leading the Fenwick Estate project in the London Borough of Lambeth for DIL which will provide 55 new homes across three buildings. His experience prior to joining Karakusevic Carson Architects includes leading the team for a new masterplan on the regeneration of the Aberfeldy Estate in Poplar including 1250 new homes, a health centre and community leisure facilities; a new development of mews houses near Russell Square situated in the Bloomsbury Conservation area and a large gallery space for artist Anish Kapoor. In addition, Sam regularly appears as a guest critic at Kingston University School of Architecture and Landscape Design.

"I think it's fair to say that we're just trying to build good housing, and we'd like most of it to be social housing."

1. Why do you think cohousing hasn't found fertile ground in the UK?

In general there hasn't been a great tradition of shared housing for whatever reason, or at least not in a form that you would consider desirable - thinking of tenement blocks and workhouses. Add into the mix the failures of badly-maintained Modernist estates that mean over the past few decades people have generally had a deep distrust for apartment buildings and anything shared that will need to be looked after, and it isn't a great recipe for success.

As a practicing architect it always feels like you are struggling against the various pieces of legislation, planning processes and authorities etcetera. Obviously these constraints are there for a reason, but it does mean that anything outside the norm is very difficult to achieve, and at the moment cohousing is one of those things that lies outside these norms - in the UK at least.

2. In your opinion, is the house/building intrinsic to the qualities of the community?

A lot of our work involves regenerating large estates around London, as these often represent low-hanging fruits in terms of re-densifying built areas, and even when the building is in a poor state it's not always easy to convince current residents that what you're providing is better, particularly when your proposal involves adding a tower, or increasing the height of buildings by several storeys. Residents are also prone to being incredibly defensive about not breaking up their community, though when questioned it often turns out that they might only know one or two people well enough to know their name. Peace offerings in the way of cake and biscuits can be almost essential to having a reasonable conversation.

Occasionally there are exceptions, and in the case of Bacton Low Rise we were approached by the residents who realised that they were in a prime area for redevelopment and wanted to be one step ahead to ensure a good deal for themselves...which they did manage! I suppose in many instances it's not the buildings themselves or perhaps even their neighbours, but the memories attached to places that people value so much. If we can make great places for new memories to be made in then that's probably a worthwhile cause.

3. In your experience, has gender equality played a role in your community/design process?

I can't say as it's something at the forefront of our minds as architects, although the Bacton Low Rise group were led by several incredible women who were admirable in their own right...I'd say at the scale of work that we do, cohousing just isn't really a viable concept.

4. How does your community/design/practice relate to politics & institutions?

In general it's best for the practice to maintain a mostly agnostic stance, considering that many of the people we have to work with day-to-day are government authorities...but I think it's fair to say that we're just trying to build good housing, and we'd like most of it to be social housing.

Additional remarks:

I think intentionality is a really crucial issue in regulatory reform. For instance the recent absorption of Lifetime Homes into Part M basically eliminated the possibility of walk-up flats, which was almost certainly not done on purpose. The ideas that are tabled at meetings for progressive architecture, the ways we discuss it and how we finally decide to implement it in legislation are of the utmost importance, and if cohousing is to be taken seriously here then certain conversations will have to happen at that kind of level.

87

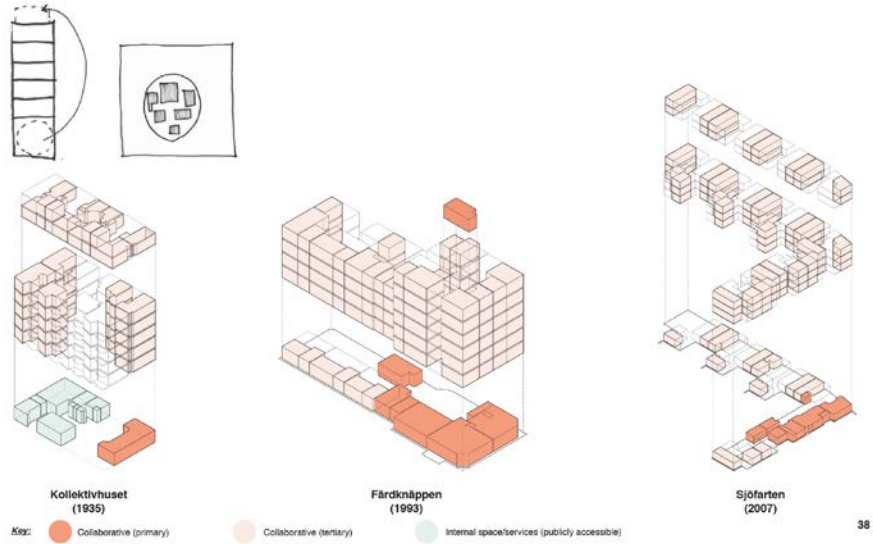
7.5 Drawn case study analysis

See additional PDF

7.6 Kollektivhus design principles

Design principle 1

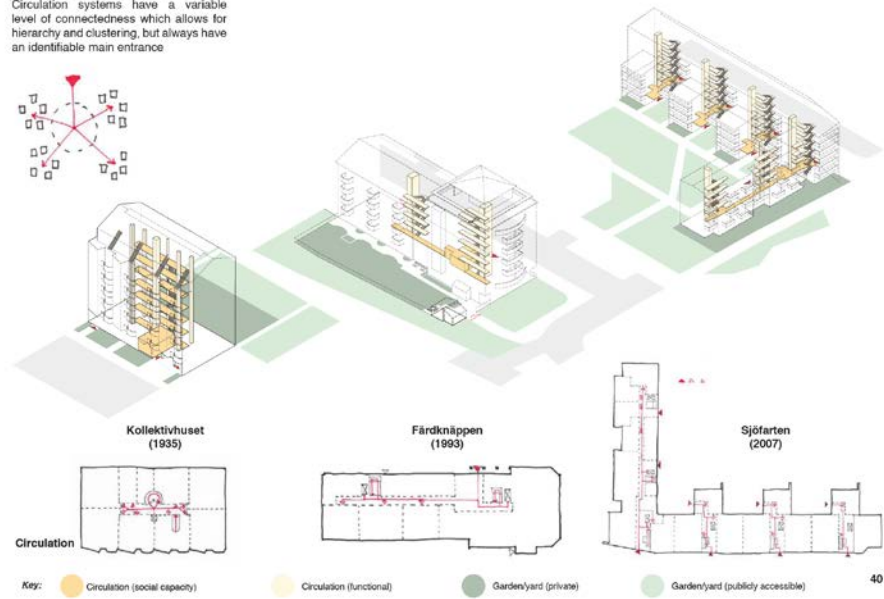
Collective facilities are centralised and generally located on the ground floor



38

Design principle 2

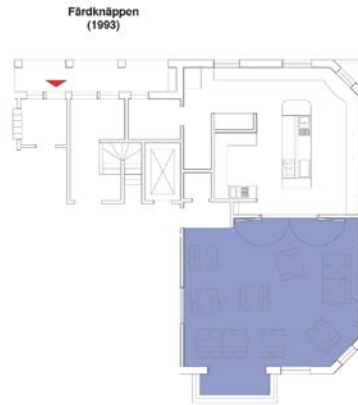
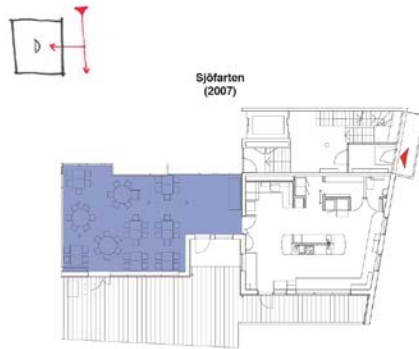
Circulation systems have a variable level of connectedness which allows for hierarchy and clustering, but always have an identifiable main entrance



40

Design principle 3

The dining room in particular is always located close to the main entrance

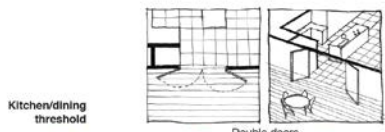
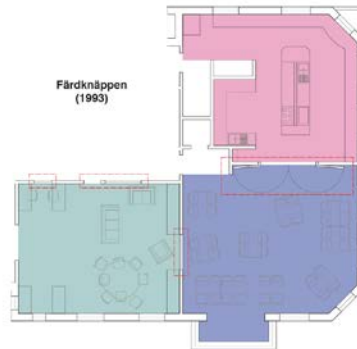
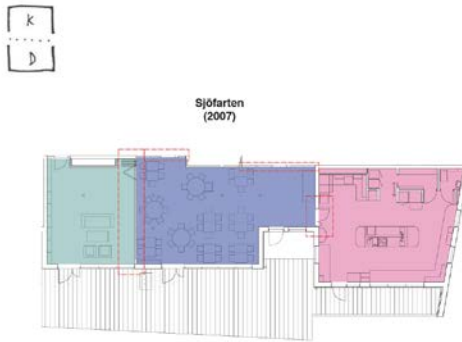


Key: ● Dining room ● Kitchen ▼ Main entrance

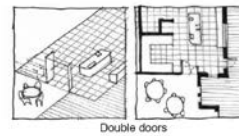
42

Design principle 4

Crucially, the threshold between kitchen and dining room always allows connection



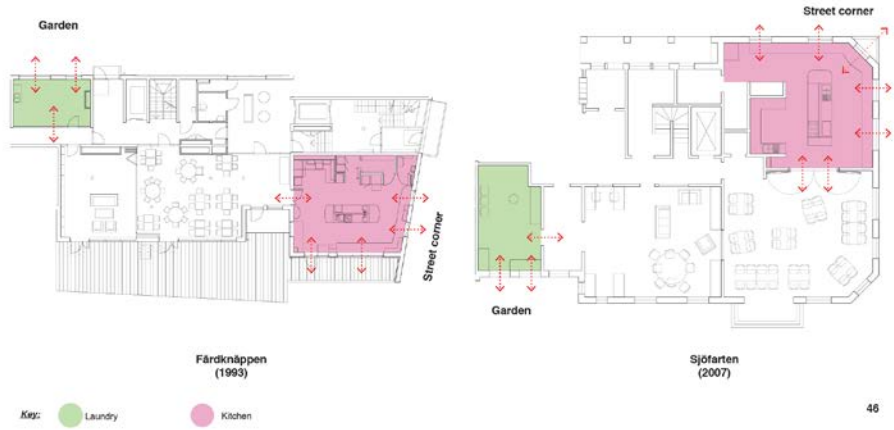
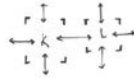
Key: ● Dining room ● Kitchen ● Living room



44

Design principle 5

The kitchen and laundry are seen as important collaborative spaces and as such have prominent, connected and visible locations



46

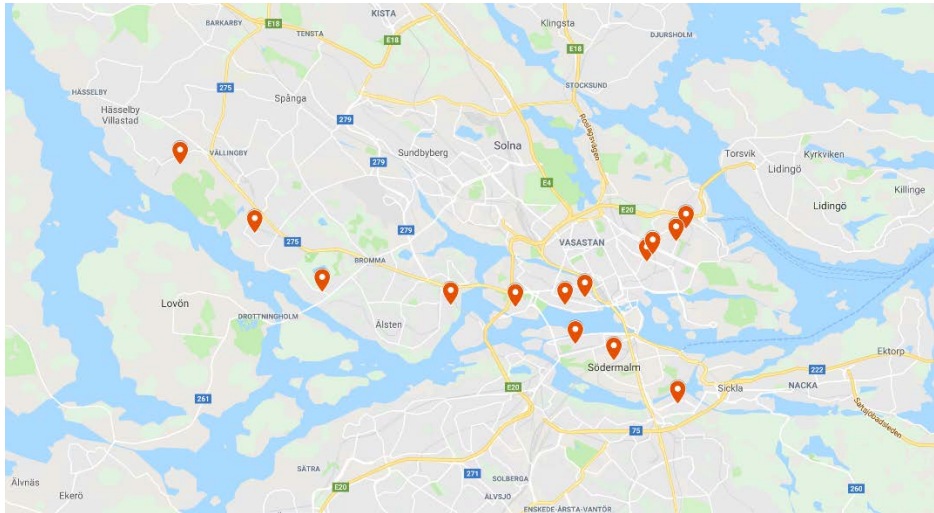
Design principle 6

The personal spaces are condensed to the minimum: bedroom, bathroom, living/dining/kitchen.



47

7.7 Additional images





Bows by Josef Franks (Pattern design 1930s, printed 1960)



The individual and the mass . . .

The personal or the universal?

Quality or quantity?

—Insoluble questions, for the collective is a fact we cannot disregard any more than we can disregard the needs of individuals for the lives of their own.

The problem in our times can be stated as:

Quantity and quality, the mass and the Individual.

It is necessary to solve this problem in building-art and industrial art.¹

Figure xx: Cover of *acceptera* (1932)