Introduction

The first attempt to build a Danish cohousing community began in the winter of 1964 when Danish architect Jan Gudmand-Hoyer gathered a group of friends to discuss current housing options. As early as 1968, Gudmand-Hoyer was working with a group to develop a more collective and integrated cohousing project. Known as the Farum Project, the design called for dwellings for families and singles clustered around an interior common area including a school, all connected by a glass covered Pedestrian Street.

At a housing exhibition in 1970, this proposal attracted the interest of several non-profit housing developers. Meanwhile in 1971, the Danish Building Research Institute sponsored a national design competition for low-rise, clustered housing. All of the winning proposals emphasized common facilities and resident participation in the design process. The competition was well publicized and had a tremendous impact on the Danish housing debate. Five years later, Tinggarden, the first rental cohousing community, was completed, designed by the winning architectural firm Vandkunsten, sponsored by the Institute, and built by a non-profit housing developer. By 1982, twenty-two owner-occupied cohousing communities had been built in Denmark.

History

The First Co-operative housing can actually be dated back to the mid-19th Century as developers began to realize that a booming economy in Copenhagen brought opportunity for development substantial profit for them. Around this time the land prices began to soar due to the high demand for living accommodation and land for development, this forced developers into designing high rise and high density living accommodation for the new population. Consequently this led to very compact living conditions, which were described at the time as “virtually slums in tall buildings, close together, without common amenities”.

In the mid-1960s, while Copenhagen was exploring projects of mass scale and community occupation, groups were experimenting on what level of community living is optimal for living the ratio between families and common facilities. A variety of options were tested, from fully equipped dwelling with low use of communal space to minimally equipped accommodation with a high use of communal space. Over the years of typology experimentation, there is no clear way to distinguish which form of family to communal living having achieved both success unsuccessful aspects.

The History of Co-operative Housing in Denmark and the impact of Cultural Changes over time

During this time in Denmark such as the Brumley Project 1853 and Classen Project in 1866. Eventually these houses began to be highly sought after properties as owners began to put them on the market making substantial profits with only the more prosperous in Copenhagen being able to afford them. In the mid-1960s, while Copenhagen was exploring projects of mass scale and community occupation, groups were experimenting in the philosophy of Co-operative housing that we know today with smaller communities building closer together and sharing communal amenities. This led to much experimentation as to what level of community living is optimal for living, the ratio between families and common facilities. A variety of options were tested, from fully equipped dwelling with low use of communal space to minimally equipped accommodation with a high use of communal space. Over the years of typology experimentation, there is no clear way to distinguish which form is the optimal design for Co-operative development, with each ratio of family to communal living having achieved both success unsuccessful aspects.
Tinggarden

Located South of Copenhagen and built in 1974, Tinggarden is the result of a design competition for alternative settlements organised by the Danish Government who required the need for an alternative, smaller industrial development on the wake of the energy crisis that gripped Europe at this time.

The apartments have a flexible design layout allowing for adaptability allowing residents within each building to expand or shrink their house over time as they so desire. With this process of adaptability, this means that the adjoining apartments can gain rooms.

In 1972, many projects similar to the co-operative in Tinggarden, looked for the support and ideas for housing in which the residents would be given the initial responsibility. However, as the design phase progressed it became clear that the owners could not be responsible for the crucial decision making required, particularly in a design process new to most at the time. Therefore after the initial decisions and design meetings had taken place the final decisions were left to the architects, who eventually redesigned significant portions of the proposal.

The development is arranged in small rows of houses clustered around a central communal space. Each building contains an individual common area containing the kitchen, living and service spaces.

Jystrup Savvaerk

Built in 1984, Jystrup Savvaerk is seen as an example of illustrating how successful and effective trading personal space for the use of more communal space can be.

The typology of the building is an L-shape single two storey construction containing individual personal spaces either side of the glass enclosed central “street”. The communal area is located to the central joint corner of the development containing kitchen, living areas, laundry rooms, workshops, hobby and music rooms as well as guest rooms.

With government subsidies not allowing for additional spending allowance on common areas (of which account for 40 % of Jystrups Savvaerk total floor area), the design was offset by creating very small individual dwellings subsequently leaving very small floor area for private living.

The enclosed street by skylight glazing also allows for extra floor area to be utilised for communal living throughout the year.

With such high demand on communal shared living within this model, not all people have thrived and have thrived and being acceptance of the model, with such a high expectation on participation and voluntary work, particularly with high emphasis on shared meal times. Everyone from the age of ten years old must participate in the making of meals within the Co-operative with six separate meal groups in rotation throughout the year. The new meal group for the week meets on Saturday with all residents and plan the meals for the next week and buy the food.

Of the original 21 families that moved into the Co-operative when it was established, 5 still remain. Any new prospective residents must meet with a committee, consisting of the two neighbours adjacent to the house, a resident from across the street as well as the committee chief. After a formal interview takes place, the prospective owner attends a Friday dinner, a workday and a business meeting. This is to allow all existing residents to meet the prospective owner as well as an opportunity for them to experience life within the Co-operative.

Tubbervaenge

Tubbervaenge Co-operative is located south of Copenhagen. Built in 1984, the Architects formed a concept derived from a previously designed co-operative housing scheme using a technique of creating a greenhouse “overcoat” between the exterior and the internal living spaces which in turn creates a communal living space for the dwelling houses.

The Dwelling are subsidised rental units modelled of traditional Danish housing. Unlike previous examples, this co-operative housing scheme is located south of Copenhagen. Built in 1984, Jystrup Savvaerk is seen as an example of illustrating how successful and effective trading personal space for the use of more communal space can be.

Unlike the previous two case studies, particular on the positive and negative effects the living accommodation has impacted on their living. One of the main design decisions to feature out of this collaboration was the relocation of the communal greenhouse living accommodation to the centre of the housing project with housing flanking either side, interestingly similar to that previously designed and studied at Jystrup Savvaerk.

References


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COOPERATIVE HOUSING SYSTEMS ELECTIVE / CIVIC HOUSING WORKSPACE