



# How are you tomorrow?

Exploring shared spaces as means to build up  
social capital and communal resilience in housing

cover image by Elina Luotonen:

The tradition of community labor or work bee events in Finnish communities date back to several centuries. They have been employed to teach younger generations about appropriate working morals and the importance of helping others. They typically aim to reach a goal like repairing a building, performing field work, or preserving foods for the winter with the help of the collective.

Reciprocity is at the heart of these events. Treating the workers to food and drink has always played a central role in organizing bees to thank the participants and keep them in good spirits. In the past it was customary thus to throw a dance and offer entertainment after finished work to celebrate the results of joint effort. The bees were recognized as a great opportunity to socialize, meet new people and even find a spouse. The work bee tradition in housing communities is in threat of being forgotten as younger generations no longer have time, interest or resources to participate and much of the property management is outsourced to maintenance companies. The danger is, that with communal labor, also other cultural heritage will be lost. However, traditions change alongside the needs of the society and work bees may take new forms of communal togetherness in the future (Museovirasto, 2021).

Elina Luotonen

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### Supervisors

Architect, Project Manager/ Researcher Katja Maununaho,  
Tampere University

Associate Professor Sofie Pelsmakers,  
Tampere University

Faculty of Built Environment, Department of Architecture

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This thesis discusses the role of shared spaces in improving people's social resilience in times of personal change or distress and facing the current global-become-local challenges of climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The shared facilities in housing, whether adjoining social, recreational, or necessary functions to private apartments, have the potential to address both human welfare as well as planetarian interest by advancing resource efficiency and share economy. The latter refers to acts of exchange, redistribution, renting, sharing, or donating information, goods, work, space and skills between individuals or communities while avoiding excess. Although the Finnish apartment building stock has been well equipped with shared utility spaces, such as laundries, drying rooms and common saunas, the social spaces like the occasional hobby or club room, seem to have fallen to low use already well before the pandemic restrictions.

This thesis uses the opportunity to speak out for shared spaces and communal practices by looking into the common arguments against sharing and addressing the knowledge gap between architectural planning and sociology. It sets out by examining why social ties in one's immediate surroundings matter and how the built environment can either hinder or support daily encounters and the formation of communality. The notions of social capital and social infrastructure in their various forms are scrutinized by combining theoretical research to the author's empirical observations and spatial analysis. In the search for concrete approaches and tools to design better shared spaces in housing neighborhoods, three case studies were performed into Nordic housing companies utilizing share economy

# Abstract English

and resident participation in their modus operandi. The author also employs material of the Housing in Change research project conducted in 2020-2022 by Tampere University ASUTUT research group and financed by YH Kodit Ltd. As the COVID-19 pandemic had a bearing on both the research results and the use of shared spaces globally, it became necessary to also discuss the virus' impact in the thesis.

The thesis culminates in a set of recommendations for spatial planners and housing companies. It was discovered that participatory practices support the formation of a well-functioning community to be able to negotiate space and develop understanding and empathy towards each other. The residents' chance to make an impact increases the sense of belonging and attachment to place, increasing the likelihood of residents taking ownership of the spaces consequentially rising the spatial utilization rate. The written guidelines and house rules work as social foundations guiding user behavior and response, which is why especial attention should be paid to the language used to communicate them. To promote social inclusiveness and diversity, it is advisable for the planners and house management additionally to organize occasional social events in the spaces for varied user groups and to tend to continuing communal Finnish housing traditions like joint work bees when possible. This thesis' goal is to encourage spatial planners to probe the limits of privacy in housing and seize the advantages of participatory design practices.

Keywords: Shared spaces, social infrastructure, social capital, share economy, resilience, communal living

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# II

Elina Luotonen: How are you tomorrow? Exploring shared spaces as means to build up social capital and communal resilience in housing

Diplomityö

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Tammikuu 2023

Tämä diplomityö käsittelee jaettujen tilojen roolia osana ihmisten sosiaalisen resilienssin edistämistä arjen muutoksessa sekä mukautumisessa globaalien kriisitilojen kuten ilmastonmuutoksen ja COVID-19 pandemian mukanaan tuomiin haasteisiin. Yhteisillä tiloilla, olivatpa ne sitten yksityisten asuntojen sosiaalisia, virkistykseen liittyviä tai välttämättömiä toimintoja täydentäviä, on potentiaalia parantaa resurssitehokkuuden ja kiertotalouden käytäntöjen avulla sekä ihmisten että planeettamme hyvinvointia. Käytännössä tämä tarkoittaa käytössä olevan tiedon, tavaran, palvelujen, tilan ja taitojen jakamista, vaihtoa, vuokraamista tai lahjoittamista yksilöiden, yhteisön tai yhteisöjen välillä. Vaikka suomalaisessa kerros- ja rivitalokannassa on perinteisesti ollut jaettavaksi tarkoitettuja tiloja, kuten pesuloita, kuivaushuoneita sekä talosaunoja, ovat sosiaaliset tilat kuten kerho- ja askarteluhuoneet jääneet suhteellisen vähäiselle käytölle jo ennen kuin koronapandemia rajoitti niiden käyttöä.

Tässä diplomityössä hyödynnetään tilaisuutta puhua jaettujen tilojen sekä yhteisöllisten asumiskäytäntöjen puolesta tarkastelemalla yleisimpiä jakamista vierastavia argumentteja sekä tarttumalla arkkitehtuurin ja sosiologian väliseen tietokuiluun. Työssä pohditaan lähiympäristön sosiaalisten verkostojen merkitystä ja sitä, kuinka rakennettu ympäristö voi osaltaan joko mahdollistaa tai rajoittaa ihmisten välistä sosiaalista kanssakäymistä ja yhteisöjen muodostumista. Diplomityössä sosiaalisen pääoman ja sosiaalisen infrastruktuurin käsitteitä tarkastellaan yhdistämällä teoreettinen tutkimus kirjoittajan omiin empirisiin havaintoihin ja tilalliseen

# Tiivistelmä Suomeksi

analyysiin. Suunnittelua tukevien konkreettisten lähestymistapojen ja työkalujen löytämiseksi tutkitaan työssä kolmea pohjoismaista asuinyhteisöä, joiden arjessa hyödynnetään onnistuneesti jakamistalouden ja asukkaiden osallistamisen periaatteita. Työssä sovelletaan Tampereen yliopiston ASUTUT-tutkimusryhmän toteuttaman ja YH Kotien rahoittaman Asuminen muutoksessa -tutkimusprojektin aineistoa. Työssä käsitellään myös koronapandemian aiheuttaman poikkeusajan vaikutuksia, sillä pandemia vaikutti vuosina 2020–2022 toteutetun hankkeen tuloksiin esimerkiksi rajoittamalla yhteisten tilojen käyttöä maailmanlaajuisesti.

Diplomityö kulminoituu analyysin tuloksiin perustuviin suosituksiin asutosuunnittelijoille sekä taloyhtiöille. Työssä havaittiin, että asukkaita osallistavat käytännöt edesauttavat hyvinvoivan ja toimivan asuinyhteisön muodostumista. Yhteisöllisyys kehittää asukkaiden vastavuoroista ymmärrystä sekä empatiakykyä toisiaan kohtaan ja täten kykyä neuvotella tilojenkäytöstä. Ihmisten mahdollisuus vaikuttaa omaan asuinympäristöönsä lisää paikkaan kuulumisen tunnetta, jolloin on todennäköisempää, että asukkaat omaksuvat tilat osaksi arkea nostaen tilojen käyttöastetta. Asukkaiden toimintaa ohjaavana sosiaalisen kanssakäymisen perustana ovat taloyhtiön pelisäännöt ja tilojen käyttöohjeet. Tämän vuoksi säädöskieleen on syytä kiinnittää erityistä huomiota. Osallistavuuden ja tasa-arvon näkökulmasta on suositeltavaa, että suunnittelijat ja taloyhtiöt järjestäisivät eri käyttäjäryhmille suunnattuja tapahtumia jaetuissa tiloissa satunnaisesti ja jatkaisivat Suomessa laajasti käytössä olevien yhteisöllisten asumiskäytäntöjen, kuten talkoiden, ylläpitämistä. Diplomityön tavoitteena on kannustaa arkkitehteja koettelemaan yksityisyyden rajoja ja hyödyntämään osallistavan suunnittelun etuja asutosuunnittelussa.

Avainsanat: jaetut tilat, sosiaalinen infrastruktuuri, sosiaalinen pääoma, jakamistalous, resilienssi, jaetut tilat, yhteisöllinen asuminen

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin OriginalityCheck -ohjelmalla

# III

*The initial plan for my thesis focused closely on my personal values and study emphasis on health-engaged and environmentally sustainable architecture. For the past year I had been working as a research assistant at Tampere University for CIRCuIT, an international project looking into circular economy in the construction sector and for ASUTUT Housing in Change -project studying residential housing habits and the living surroundings' ability to adjust to peoples' changing life situations. With advancing climate and biotic crises in mind, and considering how the built environment accounts for 40 percent of the annual greenhouse emissions according to IEA reports (International Energy Agency, 2022), I felt the need to look deeper into some of our wasteful lifestyles, high placed value on private property and newness, and study how to expand the lifespan of already existing housing stock in the name of resource efficiency. The shared spaces in housing, if done right, are unique in their potential to address both human and planetarian welfare by advancing share economy and societal resilience. I wished to find out why we are restraining to utilize that potential beyond laundry and storage spaces and are uncomfortable expanding our homes into semiprivate social spaces.*

*The climate emergency in my thesis took a step back when the COVID-19 pandemic entered the stage forcing changes to the public and private spaces and restricting social practices. Like many others, my household stopped visiting family, friends and hobbies and the kitchen-living room was converted into an office. Amid the global pandemic, I faced another more personal transformation when I started expecting my firstborn, bringing the YH Kodit research very close to home. Suddenly neither my physical nor my*



# Preface

*social surroundings were enough to support me through the changes. The empirical experiences since have provided me with the opportunity to offer the reader some accompanying contemporary examples of the discussed theory of social infrastructure and shared spaces in the Finnish context.*

*It was at this time I was also participating in the analysis of over 1300 survey replies of YH Kodit residents after having worked through the neighborhoods, service surroundings and building plans of around one hundred apartment houses. The numeric data received voices and stories. Some of the replies were short and impassive of course, but many shared openly of both heartbreaking and heartwarming experiences of home, spaces and people connected to them. They told of anger, anxiety, loss, and loneliness in exceptional times and before the pandemic. They expressed hope and longing for security and company. There were quiet wishes and loud demands. All of them relatable. All of them increasing my understanding and empathy of the people behind statistics and closed doors. I wished the residents could have read each other's anonymous feelings and of the impact they had in each other.*

*This was the turning point for my thesis and where my focus turned from spatial solutions to the sociology behind architecture. How do the restrictions on social infrastructure effect people's wellbeing? What kind of social behavior and practices should architects be aware of when creating spaces for togetherness? What is considered an architectural success?*

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# 1

Humans as species can be described gregarious, meaning we enjoy living in groups and communities, and have the need to find security, companionship, acceptance, and a sense of belonging not only in our physical surroundings but particularly in other people (Allardt, 1976) as cited by (Saari, 2016). Engaging in various social activities with others gives us pleasure, however, not all interaction needs to be intentional and actively involve others, but can be passive and noncommittal by nature. Seeing, hearing, and experiencing other people function around oneself can also be very enticing. The mere presence of other people offers us stimulation, inspiration, and creates a setting for spontaneous encounter, possibly followed by more comprehensive forms of social activities (Gehl, 1987).

In addition to enabling contact on various levels, urban spaces for encounter also provide people a setting to maintain already established contacts in an undemanding way outside of the private realm of homes. Unplanned meetings amidst daily life in one's home habitat or places of interest help to develop contact to neighbors, colleagues or people sharing the connecting thread e.g., the same hobby or life situation. Observing and communicating with other people offer also valuable information on the surrounding social environment, cultural norms and helps us function fluently in the world around us. In his book "Life Between Buildings" (1987) the Danish architect and urban planner Jan Gehl often uses the example of children and how they learn about the social relations and behavior through seeing and hearing other people act in various conditions. The limitless number of new situations and stimuli of experiencing others at play and work, speaking and moving about, provide attraction and new ideas to discuss or try themselves. (Gehl, 1987; Mutanen, 2022).

Ideally, social contacts are a positive and fulfilling experience but there

# Introduction

are two sides to the coin. Public spaces are seen as a possibility for social interaction, integration, and cohesion, yet not all encounters are friendly or relaxed but can involve everyday incivilities or lead to downright hostility between people (Laurier & Philo, 2006). Urban life is characterized by the wide diversity of its dwellers and the sharing of spaces is likely to cause tensions as there are many interpretations of the norms and rules concerning spatial relations and living together. Sometimes there are physical or social barriers blocking the use of spaces to others, creating segregation, social fragmentation, and exclusion in public spaces (Maununaho; Puumala; & Luoma-Halkola, 2021). Indeed, being together in the same space, is no guarantee of establishing social relations of any kind to known or unknown others, since digital technologies like smartphones enable globe wide connections while bypassing the locals present (Madanipour, 2020).

This thesis discussing shared spaces in housing, is focused around the carrying theme of social infrastructure. Often the time-optimized architectural studies prioritize construction and design principles, yet the science of proxemics and understanding the psychological and social impact of spaces is of equal importance, as the architect's role as a spatial professional reaches beyond physical constructions. When reading into the topic, I have found the most descriptive and multifaceted viewpoints and argumentation to be from the field of sociology and not architecture. Personally, I understand the uncertainty of a building design professional, their education mainly focused on the engineering technicalities of slabs, insulation, materials, layouts, room division, facades etc. to discuss human wellbeing and behavior. On the other hand, it feels as though the responsibility of research on the use and effects of space has been left to sociologists and advanced level academics, and the knowledge is not adequately seeping into practice. In my opinion there is a dire need for exchange of views and a great deal of crossover required between architectural- and sociology. After all, architects are creating the setting and surroundings which either prevent or promote social interaction, as the planners' understanding of public social life is always incorporated into their design. The opportunity for social activity, cohesion, wellbeing and community resilience to seed and prosper are at the heart of social infrastructure. Amid COVID-19 pandemic, where human contact is being restricted, I feel that the know-how of organizing, planning, and adapting space without damaging the social environment is in demand.

# 2

Much of the information used in the thesis was gathered as part of the Asuminen muutoksessa – Housing in Change project conducted during the COVID pandemic in 2020 - 2021. The project was carried out by ASUTUT sustainable housing research group of Tampere University and financed by YH Kodit Ltd. and Länsi-Suomen Yleishyödyllinen Asuntosäätiö. The project studied how current societal changes (such as aging population, varying family constellations, loneliness and teleworking) as well as global changes (like climate crisis or COVID-19 pandemic) affect the housing needs of the YH Kodit residents and how the private and shared spaces in the built environment can support or disrupt the everyday life in change. The author of this thesis has been working as a research assistant in sorting and analyzing of the YH Kodit building stock, collecting and studying further data of the properties' immediate neighborhood and demographic distribution, developed and performed a resident survey, participatory workshops and site visits together with her research colleagues. She has also contributed to the final project report 'Asuminen Muutoksessa – Asunnot ja naapuruston jaetut tilat asukkaiden arjessa', which is further referred to as "Lehtinen et al. 2022" in the thesis.

# Methods

The research questions are approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, combining research from the fields of architecture, urban planning, psychology, and sociology. The main objective is to identify the key challenges and opportunities for the further development of shared social spaces in housing. The theoretical discussion is accompanied by the authors empirical observations of social infrastructure and share economy combined to her architectural experience and spatial analysis. The three case studies presenting communal living examples were explored through various media in print and available online including recorded interviews, public talks, presentations, building plans and websites. In the case of Annikki, a Tampere located cohousing community, the author was able to visit the site's shared facilities and interview the founding cohousing member and fellow ASUTUT researcher Anna Helamaa as well as review her published works.

# 3

## 3.1

## 3.2

In this chapter amidst theoretical discussion into the following themes of social infrastructure, loneliness, social capital, inclusion, and participation, I am providing the reader my own experience-based observations on social life in shared spaces. I have adopted the empirical analysis approach, similar to many of the referenced authors (Gehl, Klingenberg, Oldenburg etc.) in the thesis, and am combining this to my professional knowledge in architectural design, trying to pinpoint social as well as spatial aspects of collective places and the impact they have on each other. Although my subjective observations do not represent the cavalcade of diverse and sometimes conflicting experiences of shared spaces, they serve as contemporary examples of local sharing and contribute to the discussion on the value, role, limitations and possibilities of shared infrastructure in the Finnish context.

### 3.1 Would the city be a better place if there was more regular contact among strangers?

According to American sociologist Eric Klinenberg (2018), “social cohesion develops through repeated human interaction and joint participation in shared projects, not merely from a principled commitment to abstract values and beliefs.” (pp. 12-13). It is therefore farfetched to envisage a street scape where everyone is greeting one another and stopping for a chat aiming for communal feeling. Out and about, we are wary of unknown people approaching us in the street, permitting only a minimum of actions e.g., asking for directions, the time, or the breed of the dog we are walking (Goffman, 1981) as cited by (Laurier & Philo, 2006). Things look different when we enter a public gathering place, where one consents to the



# Social Infrastructure

unspoken rules of being part of a neutral ground of conviviality. In these spaces we expect to have the right of being left alone at wish but are also agreeing to being exposed to sociability and even to irritation of being together (Oldenburg, 1989; Laurier & Philo, 2006). Inclusive and accessible spaces that enable social encounters and active participation without the need to purchase beverages or a membership, are important in supporting democratic social development and bringing the different parts of society in regular interaction with each other (Madanipour, 2020). The atmosphere, rules and behavior in shared spaces vary not only with the clientele but also with their spatial attributes, function, location, and level of publicness. A public space like a library or a café can spark-up a meaningful encounter between previously unacquainted, yet this seldomly leads to reoccurring meetings. It is therefore of interest to discuss the importance and spatial qualities of those places that bring people closer together in their own neighborhoods. The so-called social infrastructure among housing has a greater chance of reaching out to those without a regular access to public services like people with lesser mobility or people who prefer privacy yet seek for company. Neighborhoods are where communality is needed, where short everyday encounters take place, and the barrier to use social spaces is lowered due to shared ownership of utility spaces. Residential neighborhoods are likely to have diverse demographics, which sometimes have only the immediate surroundings in common. In some housing companies greeting one another is the bare minimum, while in others eyes are averted and people go about their own business as if they had no neighbors at all.

## 3.2 Would social innovation, social enterprise and civil activity occur on their own?

So how do we create favorable conditions to experience and connect to other people? Where are the places that bring people together? What do those platforms for cooperation look like and how do we make them accessible to everyone?

The term 'social infrastructure' is often used to describe physical spaces and facilities that provide opportunities for people to have social interactions and build connections to each other. However, the wider definition includes a whole array of activities, organizations, collectives, and groups with

## 3.2

## 3.3

the same aim of fostering communal togetherness (Yarker, 2019). These opportunities can take place under face-to-face conditions but also on digital platforms and virtual hangouts. Facilities like libraries, churches and swimming halls, and green spaces like parks, squares and playgrounds are examples of physical public spaces and establishments in which social activities take place and social capital is accumulated. Commercial spaces like grocery stores, shopping centres, cafés, pubs, banks and post offices together with recreational hubs such as bowling alleys, gyms, sport clubs, and club rooms can also act as social infrastructure. (Maununaho;Puumala;& Luoma-Halkola, 2021; Gregory, 2018). The defining outcome or key element of social infrastructure, in short, is to support the formation, development and maintenance of social relationships and co-operation in a community (Gregory, 2018). From this point of view, transitory spaces like sidewalks, stairwells, lobbies, doorways, bus stops and trips on any public transport can be used to meeting and greeting, and are therefore worthy of the planners attention. Different kinds of social infrastructure support different levels of interaction.

### 3.3 What if someone is not socially talented or feeling home among people? Is there a down-side to staying an observer?

Naturally some disagree to the notion of people constantly needing each other or merely prefer their privacy. Not everyone chooses to participate in public life nor has the time, wish or energy to share into the responsibilities of a community. Nonetheless, their chosen lifestyle need not be static, but their needs might change at some point. What defines solitude, is that is

Image 1

Market place as a gathering spot  
even outside opening hours



# Social Infrastructure

optional, and the person knows that they are able to return to social life at any time (Saari, 2016). In the words of Ray Oldenburg (1989): “The first requirement of a good community is that one need not be a member of it” (p. xxvi).

To some living in an active neighborhood without becoming personally involved can be enough, or their social circles are filled with friends, colleagues, and family members elsewhere. However, being alone is not always a conscious decision nor sought-after and loneliness is the emotion rising from insufficient (or complete lack of) social relationships. In *Yksinäisten Suomi* (2016), a book on Loneliness in Finland, the author and editor Juho Saari, a professor in social and health policy, discusses how loneliness is not purely a characteristic trait, but how its occurrence is connected to societal structures, cultural differences and status inequality. He explains how it is a state that might be extremely difficult to rid oneself of as the feelings of emotional and social isolation feed themselves meaning that they slowly distort the person’s interpretation of social situations and cause the person to avoid company as they might see social encounters threatening or leading inevitably to social failure (Saari, 2016). Loneliness is also often connected to feelings of guilt and shame which prevents the person to speak out and seek help and is the cause and consequence of problems with people’s general health and wellbeing (Grönlund & Falk, 2016). The risk of suffering from loneliness and its more severe side-effects like substance abuse, obesity, depression, unemployment, becoming indebted or self-harming, is higher for people with lower socioeconomic status simply because those well-off in society have more possibilities of fending off the negative impacts even if there is no difference in the experienced emotion itself. Therefore, loneliness can and should be battled by means of community policies and becomes a societal problem to be fought together. (Saari, 2016).

It is imperative for the state and its municipalities to recognize the value of social infrastructure and support the third sector which provides those services, facilities, spaces, and activities where people can gain and maintain contact with each other and form communities. However, I see that the housing sector can also step up to support this infrastructure and create inclusive neighborhoods that for their part support togetherness. Shared spaces should be planned also to accommodate those who at times wish to stay observers, want to be left alone yet enjoy the buzz of others

## 3.3

## 3.4

about, or need their own space before entering company. Spaces that offer casual chances and situations for social relations have an important role in pre-empting loneliness and should be kept low-threshold places where active joining in, a membership or purchasing something is required. Spatially this might mean a sitting niche, a corner table or comfortable furniture placed away from the active area but with good visual contact to others. Ideally this position could offer say a work spot, the furniture could have a sheltering feature signaling the wish of the occupant to be left to their own company or undertaking and arrange an unembarrassed, natural space to enjoy collective atmosphere without active participation.

As written above, organization activity and communal participation do not draw in the lonely, and the more profound the loneliness is, the unlikelier the person is to attend social events. In my opinion, shared spaces among housing, mixed into the immediate vicinity of utility spaces offer a unique setting in reaching out to those people and offering everyone safe, regular and unobtrusive encounters with their neighbors. A warm greeting or an acknowledging exchange of words might make a big difference to someone suffering from loneliness. Casual contacts also form the social networks thorough which a lot of information on the local environment is passed and which also spread new ideas and behavioral models connected to health and wellbeing. Research into prosocial support behavior shows how the ubiquity of considerate and friendly conduct towards others strongly varies within neighborhoods of the same city and is not explainable for example by the block's ethnic background but is rather connected to the culture of reciprocity. Studies show how the prosocial behavior of the individual is often situation-bound and guided by the local community's values and policies and if the person moves into an area of selfish and non-reciprocal behavior they also become similarly egoistic. (Saari, 2016). Many an elderly, unemployed, single, or a newcomer to the area would benefit from places that get them started on networking and making friends. Then again, changes in personal or global life might awaken the socially most well-equipped individual to realize a need for new kinds of connections or a very private person to see how they lack the ties that offer help and support in the time of crisis.

# Social Infrastructure

## 3.4 Should one take preventative measures against loneliness or is there a safety net available?



*The first autumn into COVID-19 in 2020, I became pregnant with my firstborn. Luckily the practice of teleworking was long established and normalized, and I was able to attend work from home as I was nauseous and sick well into the second trimester of the pregnancy. On the downside I was confined home tighter, my family decided to avoid visiting to protect me from virus contagion and I felt very isolated from my friends who were not in the same phase of life as myself. Due to restrictions, I was visiting some the health examinations and the second ultrasound alone and never saw the face of the personnel behind masks. More often than not I was miserable and lonely and was going through an identity crisis with many fears connected to childbearing. In Finland, the physical and mental health of the expectant family is prioritized high in the social system, and we were offered plenty of therapeutic counselling to ease the life change. I turned down the help, as I could not identify with what I imagined to be the usual clientele of Someone-in-a-particularly-difficult-position-and-problems. What I wanted, was “mere” peer support and face-to-face talks instead of online meetings with professionals. I wanted to feel normal, safe and one of many women in the same situation -not like a mental patient. I could not verbalize my wish then but luckily my health professional could read between the lines, and I was able to get into a weekly organized club for expectant mothers. The*

Image 2  
First gathering of the mom club

# 3.4

# 3.5

*support group was organized by a social business association financed by the aid authorities of European Union, Finnish State, and City of Tampere. The pregnant's group of seven members started meetings officially in the early spring of 2021 and finished in summer 2022 when the first baby turned one years old. We were then shown the gently to the door of this social infrastructure, as new expectants filled the space previously occupied by us. Today my social capital includes this club of mothers who provide me with genuine heartfelt friendships, lunch companions, laughter, words of comfort, recipes, practical advice on child upbringing, baby health and illnesses, relationships and events suited to families. We exchange information from baby equipment and sales, to applying to kindergarten or jobs to renovating a house etc. Within the group we also exchange items and clothing no longer needed by the other. I feel strengthened in my motherhood and can rely on having at least one of the seven pairs of ears ready for my now-toddler-centered worries which might pass the interest and know-how of my childless friends.*

Image 3  
Baby sling workshop



### 3.5 Why do social ties and collaboration matter?

Social capital refers to the relationships and connections between individuals or groups. In other words, it describes the social networks and the trust, understanding and reciprocity arising from the interactions among people (THL, 2022a). Those contacts are valuable as they hold members of society together, keep things rolling and enable other important stuff to happen. Social capital supports social action, volunteering, co-operation,

# Social Infrastructure

and social enterprise which enable functioning modern economies to prosper (Gregory, 2018). Promoting social inclusion, an objective of the Finnish Government and the European Union, is essential to battling poverty, inequality, and social exclusion in communities. In fact, social inclusion is a prerequisite to equality, general wellbeing, and health (THL, 2022b). Inclusion boosts societal participation and the opportunity to influence matters concerning one's own life fosters bonding and the feeling of belonging in a community (THL, 2022b). A study linked to social capital made by Statistics Finland (2002), concluded that citizens who participated in cultural and association activity were also notably more engaged in casual civic activities, such as contributing to newspapers or periodicals and participating in demonstrations, than the population on average (Hanifi & Tilastokeskus, 2019). Higher participation rate of those active citizens also correlated with better social networks and general trust they felt compared to the rest of the population. However, the same study shows how societal participation is connected to the socioeconomical status and that people with intermediate to higher level education are more likely to engage in communal activities in for example sport clubs, political parties, housing cooperatives, church, or choir activity, than persons with low-level education. Additionally, the different shapes of participation tended to accumulate to those who had already engaged in communal activity on one field, separating them from those who didn't participate in anything (Hanifi & Tilastokeskus, 2019). Based to this, it can be noted how participation in organizational activities helps to ward off loneliness yet is more attainable to those societally well-off (Grönlund & Falk, 2016). It is therefore in my opinion relevant to study how to lower the threshold and encourage societal participation and support the different channels and establishments that offer easy, non-commodified communal access. Naturally, state or city provided support services in employment, social- and healthcare are important in looking after the members of their community, however, there needs to be variation of services and mediums that can reach out and appeal to people from different backgrounds, age groups, socioeconomical status'. After all, casual social connections in daily life introduce new ideas and ways of functioning to individuals and hence promote social inclusion and invite to participation.

To summarize, participation and social inclusion go hand-in-hand and feed into stronger social capital and overall resilience of a community. If we want to maintain and build up the social capital with the means mentioned above,

# 3.5

# 3.6

we must consider the structures that support the formation of networks and cooperation.

### 3.6 How does the physical social infrastructure impact group activities and activity?

*Returning to the scenario of the weekly mom club and the physical infrastructure that held the social together. What are the spatial aspects of this community? Did the space in which we met play a role in the formation of our friendships and how about now that we no longer have access? The association organizing these support groups possesses a five-room apartment in the city center where the few personnel dedicated to families with children, also have an office room for themselves. Designed barrier free, the flat's openings are wide and easy to navigate with strollers, or a child and their belongings in arm and the floors everywhere are covered with a grey marble-patterned linoleum ready to endure dirt and damage from multiple guests. Apart from that, the apartment looks and operates very much like a normal flat except there are no beds to sleep in and no occupants during the night. It is modestly, spaciouly furnished but with all the equipment needed to change a diaper, storage multiple baby carriage, and a good deal of toys and seating for tiny visitors as well as their weary parents. The living room combined to an open kitchen area has plenty of natural light, is toddler proof, unpretentious in decoration yet cozy and comfortable. The flat looks and feels like a home yet obviously lacks all the clutter and personal rummage of domestic life. It is a neutral, safe space where all feelings are accepted and there is no need to hide anger, tears or tiredness as it hosts no strangers. The group would enter and leave their jackets at the hall, push the carriages to a separate room at the back, which is quiet from the street and from the mothers, allowing some babies to carry on with their nap in peace. There is also an option of a glazed balcony with a baby monitor if the little one rather slept in the fresh air. It was effortless, how none of the group members had to play the host, worry about cleanliness before or after and was free to come and go within the 2,5 hour time frame as they pleased. The familiar homelike setting gave an evenly distributed sense of possession and control over the space without actual ownership and the group behaved as relaxed as if owning the place. A cup of coffee and a sandwich was always provided by the association, yet sometimes we brought our own little extra to the delight of others. The group would usually place themselves in the mismatch*



# Social Infrastructure

*living room seating, gathering around a play mat, onto which the infants were placed to gaze at each other, toys sprinkled around them. Later, learning to crawl, the babies would break the camp and start to explore outside the circle into other parts of the flat.*



*Since the group meetings finished in the summer 2022, our club has been homeless and are meeting less frequently if at all. Almost all communication happens via the chat platform of WhatsApp and the babies do not meet each other anymore. We tried getting together in the library and some of the rare cafés in town with space enough for half a dozen baby carriages and multiple highchairs, but the buzz and public mood didn't allow for private conversations and agitated the little ones quite soon. Sitting in a circle around our most valued members was not possible. The public social spaces were not suiting our needs and in some we felt unwelcomed as we took space beyond the appropriate personal limit and made ruckus unbecoming other customers.*

*Some members not bashful about chaos at home, invited the others to their roomier homes in the suburbs, but in my case our three room flat felt too small and too untidy to host seven mothers and their children even if my partner wasn't working from home. Sharing my private space additional of*

Image 4  
Babies' social circle

## 3.6

## 3.7

*my private matters, felt too intimate. At this point I would have cherished a shared living room in my block of flats or even in the neighborhood. We could have used the space every mid-morning in our usual time on Tuesdays and in combination with the playground outside without being forced to spend money on beverages! Sadly, for us my block of flats doesn't have shared spaces beyond the utility rooms, storage and stairwells. Occasionally some members manage to catch up at a club space in the city center organized by the Child Welfare for families to get together, play and socialize. The so-called Family café is open once a week for a few hours which sets temporal boundaries of access, but similar state and donation funded social infrastructure exist around the city. One needs only to stay informed about their varying timetables and activities to know when to access a slot suitable for the age level of one's offspring, whether it is free of charge and if one needs to sign up beforehand.*

*These services are invaluable to families without a support network close by and indoor play areas are needed in the harsh Finnish weather conditions. I personally cherish these semipublic, child-proof places where I can chitchat to other grown-ups while my son has space to roam freely and connect with other children of various ages. The atmosphere is mostly relaxed although there is a lot of small person business, outcries, dashing and commotion about. These spaces are first and foremost social infrastructure for children, meaning that the adults present are alert and available to the kids and therefore have no time to get into longer or deeper conversations with each other. There is friendliness, support and mutual concern, however private and more meaningful encounters among adults are practically impossible and the chance of forming a permanent community is rather scarce. I believe this to be partly the case, as the spaces are run by municipal funded organs and are seen as a library-like public service that runs smoothly without any investment from its users. There is also little mix of demographics as persons without children aren't likely know about such places nor have a reason to enter them. There is safety in exclusion but perhaps there could be a space where parents, children and the childless could spend time together and be equally entertained without segregating or emphasizing the needs of each other?*

# Social Infrastructure

## 3.7 Who owns and maintains social infrastructure? What threatens it and is it thriving or crumbling?

Neither privately organized nor publicly held social infrastructure come without their problems. Privately held social infrastructure, for example pubs, cafés, yoga centers, boxing clubs, dance studios, events and digital networks are often commercial in nature and their longevity and development therefore depend on their financial success. Small scale voluntary and community organizations face similar problems in living from hand-to-mouth, are therefore unable to plan far ahead and their financial situation might limit their access to a suitable and permanent physical space necessary for their activities. As private owners and investors of commercial spaces are more likely to pursue short-term financial rewards rather than doing long-term service for the community, such social spaces and infrastructure are in a vulnerable position. Although the management of these spaces is often done by users directly, the facilities are exposed to the whims and life situation of their remote owners. (Gregory, 2018).

On the other hand, publicly owned social infrastructure such as schools, children's centers or libraries for example, are often unable to work across administrative boundaries and their flexibility is being held back by bureaucracy (Gregory, 2018). State or city organized services and facilities are also often top-down in nature and leave little room for users to shape the infrastructure built for them. The top-down social infrastructure is necessary and often rather well-maintained in Finland (Reith-Banks, 2018) but might end up leaving the citizens as passive observers. The unclaimed user-ownership of public spaces could manifest as disinterest to use the facilities, to chip in, look after the spaces and limit the imagination of what could be. Unregistered and small-scale citizen clubs or associations might have problems to gain access and book spaces from public facilities to support their own activity.

Demographic studies show that Finns form a high trust society where the model of welfare state with its progressive taxation and universal social programs in health care and education provide socioeconomic equality and enable public investments in social infrastructure. The existence of manifold civic associations in Finland foster trust on the organization level and in the society. Trust and safety in return build up resilience, wellbeing and health. (Saari, 2016; Dorling & Koljonen, 2020). The Finnish third sector (civic activity groups, volunteer organizations, self-motivated clubs,

## 3.7

## 3.8

and congregations) is perceived mainly to provide advocacy work as well as hobby and pastime activities. On the other hand, even though Finns do not associate the third sector with basic welfare, they expect it to partially supplement the public sector services, to support the disadvantaged and marginalized groups and count on welfare organizations to contribute their help in times of crisis. (Grönlund & Falk, 2016). Social infrastructure therefore plays a critical role in the Finnish society and the third sector contributes not only social support and relief that wouldn't otherwise reach those in need but also gathers information on the wellbeing and current challenges of the Finnish population. Temporary global and national threats connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis, immigration, political polarization, aging population, and migration from the countryside to the cities is creating pressure to many organizations and the capacity of communities to respond to these challenges. Even though the Finnish welfare state has invested into social infrastructure in the past, it should by no means be taken for granted, nor untouchable to economic fluctuation. A functioning network of social infrastructure needs investments of time, money, and skills from the state, communities, and individuals.

### 3.8 Does social infrastructure include and reach everyone? Characteristics of Third Places.

In his book *The Great Good Place* (1989) Ray Oldenburg focuses on a portion of social infrastructure he calls 'the third place', distinct of the other social environments of home as 'first place' and workplace as 'the second' and discusses the characteristics essential to informal public life. As the first two spheres have a more profound claim to the individual and demand a more serious involvement, the third place is where people go to unwind, enjoy recreational activities and most importantly, connect with other people. Third places in short are the core settings of where the person's social capital is built and regardless of their cultural context or outward appearance, share some common features. Third places are "the people's remedy for stress, loneliness and alienation". (Oldenburg, 1989).

Even though Oldenburg often refers to cafés, bars, taverns and club spaces as the preferred choice of social space, his observations on the key characteristics of third places are in my opinion worth discussing as they are well applicable to shared spaces in housing. Some objectives

# Social Infrastructure

connected to minimized financial barriers or locality for example, are in fact even better realized, when the third place is the common living room of a residential building. The discussion also gives an inclination of some of the good practices and policies that make social spaces functional and enjoyable to all.

<b>Neutral ground</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enables people to be more sociable</li> <li>▪ Equal rights and shared responsibilities in using the space</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enabled by equality and diversity policies</li> </ul>
<b>Welcoming, open to all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expands social possibilities with known and unknown others</li> <li>▪ Low threshold participation</li> </ul>
<b>Minimal to no financial barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non-commodified access</li> <li>▪ No purchased membership required</li> <li>▪ In housing however, this often requires residence in the building</li> </ul>
<b>Local</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It better serves the purpose of bringing together people who share the same living environment</li> <li>▪ Increases the chances of the spaces being actively in use</li> <li>▪ Spontaneous and casual drop-bys</li> <li>▪ Reachable by foot</li> </ul>
<b>Encourages conversation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The pace and sound setting are relaxed and facilitate talking</li> <li>▪ One does not need to join in but can also remain an observer</li> </ul>
<b>Flexible and extended opening hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The space caters thus to different timetables and life situations of the dwellers</li> </ul>

Table 2.1

Characteristics of Third places according to Ray Oldenburg (1989)

The first defining characteristic according to Oldenburg (1989) is third places' capacity to offer neutral ground, where the social and economic status of the dwellers are levelled. This means that a diversity of local people is drawn in without any expectations on the prior knowledge, expertise, or economic resources the dwellers might possess. They all have the same rights, the temporal ownership to the place and can join in and depart at wish without causing inconvenience to others. Away from the physical spaces of home and workplace and separated from the hierarchies and roles attached to them, it becomes possible to establish informal and even intimate relations among people like discussing one's thoughts and troubles with an outsider. In a way, neutral ground gives people spatial protection from each other enabling them to be more sociable.

# 3.8

A place where status doesn't matter, is naturally an inclusive place. Formal associations and clubs that demand membership tend to be exclusive and often involve people who have similar interests and resources available (Oldenburg, 1989; Yarker, 2019). Third places at their best expand the individual's social palate and bring different parts of the community into constant dialogue with each other. Noted, this might at times include conflict and leave attitudes unchanged, even hardened and the same encounter can be experienced and interpret differently among people. (Valentine, 2008 as cited by Yarker, 2019 (Massey, 2001). Regular low-level social situations occurring in everyday spaces in the neighborhood, however, are important as they lead people to observe each other's different needs, values, life situations, economies and intentions. Together with participatory approaches, communal events and equality and diversity policies implemented in the use of the spaces help the residents to establish a sense of "Us", develop empathy towards each other and find ways to communicate and negotiate the spaces they share. (Yarker, 2019).

Physically, third places should be a seamless part of the everyday public life, meaning they are locally situated and easily accessible on foot. This way they enable casual and spontaneous drop-bys which having to take the car or public transport might otherwise undermine. Easy access places in the neighborhood are notably important for children, elderly and other people with limited mobility or autonomy who are not able to leave their home surroundings by themselves. Situated among housing, the social spaces are more likely to host people from the same neighborhood and the chance to see a familiar face is higher than for example in a public library. (Oldenburg, 1989). This can increase the sense of security people have in their living environment and make them more comfortable and encouraged to get involved in issues concerning the community. Social contact among neighbors and locals therefore provides a foundation for political discussion, civic engagement, and change. (Yarker, 2019).

A low profiled, unassuming, and homely atmosphere is relevant in maintaining the ambience of equality, informality and accessibility and is a common feature to many third places. Oldenburg (1989) is visioning here the contrast between an old cozy pub and "a shiny franchise establishment" and is arguing how newer places in prominent locations become the attraction to transient customers and are reigned by commercialism and high-profile appearances. Indeed, financial barriers and cultural pressures in gentrifying

# Social Infrastructure

neighborhoods may cause some residents to feel disenfranchised and that certain spaces are not for them (Yarker, 2019; Madanipour, 2020). Shared social spaces in housing have therefore a unique opportunity to offer non-commodified homely settings that everyone feels entitled to use. Additionally, unlike capitalized public spaces, they could be booked to house user-organized activity and initiatives and act as a continuation of homes. Unassuming outer appearance in this case could mean furniture that encourages rearrangement according to residents' tastes and needs, surface materials that are attractive yet easy to clean and the possibility for residents to participate in the decoration process either in planning, creating, or providing something that makes the space their own.

Lastly, Oldenburg (1989) mentions how traditionally many third places have kept long hours to accommodate people with different schedules and paid or unpaid home, work and school responsibilities. A shared social space in housing is therefore an ideal solution as it needs no personnel to open the doors and provide services, but residents can have access to it whenever it suits them and their social needs the best.

Image 5

Rauhaniemi Folk Spa



# 3.9

## 3.9 Concluding words

*With the day rhythm of my baby and his demand for undisturbed and quiet sleeping conditions, my attitude towards my wall-neighbors changed drastically. Me and my partner were seldomly bothered by hearing life around us unless it went on way past midnight. Along with my son, I now became agitated by what-felt-like constant thuds and clatter from the neighbors living above us. One evening around 8pm after a crash, yell and a vacuum-cleaning operation that didn't seem to find a finale, I reached mine and stomped upstairs to confront the culprits to the teary tired fit my baby was having. My own outraged state cooled down when an elderly couple opened the door and after my disgruntled drivel, apologized for the mayhem. The husband had dropped a glass of tea and his wife had gotten carried away with cleaning, worried about the shards imperceptible to her bad sight. I could see why the ruckus couldn't be avoided, yet still in my sleep-deprived personal turmoil wanted to underline the struggle of getting the baby to fall sleep even without the neighbors' contribution. They apologized, I thanked and went back to my own apartment.*

*A whole year later I happened to share the elevator with the lady. She didn't remember me too well, but I told her we lived in the flat below theirs, apologized for any ruckus my now-toddler might be making by him banging toys and shrieking at odd times. She hadn't heard anything she said. We then commented on the renovation (and the sounds caused) of the larger 5th floor apartment recently sold, after which she continued to tell about the other residents who'd lived in the building before us and having lived there herself for over 30 years. Her husband had had to move into a nursing home down the street half a year before because of his Parkinson's disease. The time before his transfer had been challenging.*

*This encounter took place between the stairwell and the lift, my neighbor still inside the lift and either one of us always extending a hand, a foot, a handbag or an umbrella to stop the doors from sliding shut. We talked perhaps a quarter of an hour and could have talked on, as the topic was so unexpectedly personal yet getting into more detail was awkward due the echo of our semi-public surroundings. It felt important. But we wished each other a pleasant evening and let the doors close. At home it came to me that I hadn't actually registered when the frequent clatter of items hitting the floor above had stopped. I had been so caught up in the life happening in my own flat.*



# Social Infrastructure

The characteristics of third places collectively describe the concept of an inviting and welcoming physical setting where people can start to form vibrant, safe, and reciprocal urban communities. The typical features by Oldenburg haven't been drawn-up prior the spaces construction but collected thorough observations of places successful in the process of encouraging social interaction and mutual support. Any social space, public or semi-public, however, is always shaped by a wider set of sociopolitical power dynamics and local context and will therefore be more accessible to some than to others. For example, my small family was discouraged by the staff of a volunteer organization to attend a play group for local families because my partner doesn't speak Finnish as his first language. In my teens I was too uncomfortable to visit our local youth club as I was shy of their regulars, a gang of "cool kids". In the same manner, many people lack the self-confidence to attend new activities, groups and spaces for the first time and we shouldn't assume that all social infrastructure is equally well-resourced or equally accessible to all. Even though Finland might have a well-acknowledged and well-maintained network of public social places and services, that doesn't mean all social dry areas are covered or that we have done enough to stop there. By widening the diversity of social places, the range of social infrastructure in reaching people is also expanded. Different kinds of places, with different degrees of publicness, different purposes and various kinds of social interactions enable options for people to find a place they feel is comfortable, inviting and suiting themselves. We also need to remain mindful of the power relations that might exist in some spaces and actively pursue equality policies and address any structural barriers that might limit the use of social spaces to others. (Yarker, 2019).

# 4

## 4.1

In a block of flats residents' everyday lives intertwine through daily sightings, greetings, and hearing each other's steps and voices through apartment walls. A sporadic group of people, however, does not automatically form a community or a sense of belonging (Laurier & Philo, 2006; Madanipour, 2020; Maununaho;Puumala;& Luoma-Halkola, 2021). Neighborly ties form through joint activities and interest. The advantages of communality include possibilities to influence and participate, form reciprocal relationships, and share competences, spaces, and items within the group (Yarker, 2019; Helamaa, 2013). Communal activity is voluntary, non-demanding and flexible in nature, and is supported by shared facilities and procedures within the housing block (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012). This chapter discusses those shared spaces situated at the threshold between the private apartment and the neighborhood as pieces of social infrastructure. It first dives into the feelings of doubt over spatial negotiations expressed in the Housing in Change resident survey and explores the cultural and psychological bias of Finnish dwellers. The discussion is followed by a representation of three Nordic housing companies which successfully utilize share economy and social capital to improve residential wellbeing.

### 4.1 What are the arguments that support privatization and speak against social infrastructure among housing?

In Finland, the term "yhteistilat" or "shared spaces" is often used to refer to all common facilities of a residential building like storage spaces, stairwells, laundry, drying rooms, shared saunas, and club rooms. Those spaces are built to increase the comfort and quality of living and ideally they also provide chances for neighborly encounter and communality. (RT 93-

# Shared Spaces

10957, 2009). Shared spaces indoors are usually not directly accessible from the apartments and locate on the ground floor or in the cellar. They are commonly available to all residents living the same building or are extended to the use of the neighboring buildings within the same housing company. (Rieppo & Unkuri, 2021). These shared facilities can also be utilized for the needs of the wider neighborhood to enable a larger spatial variety and efficient use of space (Maununaho, 2021).

This thesis discusses shared spaces from the social point of view as the skepticism over the aspect of added levels of socializing and people's ability to follow rules seems to slow down the development of share economies. Shared facilities come with shared responsibilities and a large set of regulations. These rules can be written down together by the community, but some are also unspoken assumptions based on the cultural norms and ideals of the users (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012). With spaces belonging to everyone and no-one, there are as many interpretations of acceptable behavior and ways to share as there are people using the space. (ACAN FIN, 2021). Conflicts seem inevitable.

I would next like to briefly discuss the arguments that condemn sharing in the Finnish housing culture. In the research project Housing in Change both residents and employees of YH Kodit in Tampere and Turku were asked for their opinions and feelings on shared spaces. They commented either in an online survey or an interview on already existing spaces as well as future scenarios and weighed the pros and cons of sharing. The most common argument against sharing spaces in housing expressed mistrust in other people and fear of disputes arising from the use and maintenance of spaces. There was doubt whether rules concerning cleanliness, noise and access could be kept and how more work would fall to others when misbehavior would occur. The skeptic voices from the residential side saw threat in human conflict, loss of control over space in the immediate vicinity of their homes and faltering safety if outsiders could gain access to the shared space or items in the building. Personnel from the housing company including maintenance staff stated how the existing club rooms or hobby spaces were not really used or appreciated and caused more work in upkeep and problems in form of resident quarrels. (Lehtinen, ym., 2022).

How valid are the fears mentioned above? Is the argumentation solid enough to hold us back from sharing spaces in housing? After all, there are

# 4.1

# 4.2

# 4.3

many successful cohousing examples around the globe and coexistence in varied social infrastructure doesn't fail due to disputes or rules ignored. How can designers make sure conflict is minimized in the spaces planned to bring people together?

## 4.2 Is the Nordic housing climate too cool for sharing?

Image 6

Pop-up café on lake Näsijärvi  
along ski and skating tracks



The Finns often describe themselves as an introvert nation and celebrate privacy, and as these characteristics are in the general discussion considered hinderance to the success of socially extrovert spaces, I feel the need to shortly discuss the Finnish identity in my thesis.

The myth on our reserved nature, the withdrawn Finn, holds within some traits of the cultural values of modesty, personal space and trust in the system. The concept of personal space, where keeping distance to other people, especially if there is no personal connection to them, manifests as a physical gap but reaches mental dimensions as well. From a Finnish perspective, it is polite not to disturb others with your presence or protrude their space for example by wearing too much fragrance, by forcing a dialogue or inquiring after their personal life. In other cultures, this might translate from a lack of interest to shyness to downright rudeness. Additionally, Finns are not considered qualified in small talk because quiet moments are not considered awkward in discussion and therefore one doesn't feel obliged to entertain others with discourse. Hence the illusion of the rude introvert nation, a tale that is still alive and well within Finland. Timidness is merely an excuse called to aid when explaining why the idea of sharing feels uncomfortable.

# Shared Spaces

From my point of view, the reason much closer to home, is the Finns aversion of conflict. Making a fuss of oneself, one's wishes and needs, breaks against good manners. In an apartment building, if the neighbor has made too much noise or parked their car wrong, a Finn would avoid making a scene to confront the person face-to-face and choose to drop a snappy note instead. I see this as a consequence of not having enough contact with the neighbors in the first place. Ideally, a shared living room in a housing block helps people to become familiar with one another and eases communication by offering a safe space to discuss and overcome differences. In my opinion, staying to oneself whether in an apartment block or in the single-family suburb is terribly easy and it becomes more difficult to reach over the barricades of privacy that we collectively surround ourselves with. It is community spirit that needs encouragement. After all, it is communication and confrontation that builds up tolerance and resilience, not avoiding encounter for fear of disagreements.

The Finnish virtue and curse of self-reliance, the culture of getting by on one's own, has also undoubtedly weighed the Finnish housing habits. This can be seen in the popularity of owner-occupied detached and apartment housing, and in the underdeveloped service culture among block- and row housing. It also manifests as difficulties in acknowledging social dependence and the craving for human connections. (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012; Juntto, 2010). Self-determination is viewed one of the draw points of detached housing yet the feeling of safety and the benefits of known neighbors and assured neighborly help can in fact ensure a larger autonomy from for example close relatives and professional help in caretaking and hence enable a longer chance of aging in place without compromising on social capital. (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012).

## 4.3 Housing preferences or path dependency?

The commonly preferred Finnish housing path leads from parental home to small rental apartments towards the pinnacle of more space and autonomy in ownership and detached housing. Ownership in housing has a long history in Finland and favorable loan terms and low interest rates in mortgages have made ownership possible to even low-income families and individuals today. A clear majority of Finns continue living in owner-occupied dwellings, which are also higher in esteem than rental units and a

# 4.3

popular way to invest and prosper in the long run. (Juntto, 2010). Only about half a percent of the Finnish population is living in shared flats (Kannisto 2020, as cited in (Hyödynmaa, 2020), which is generally considered a temporary housing form for familyless students forced to share due to life-situation and poor finances (Hyödynmaa, 2020). With the Finnish Student Housing Foundation, students do not have a final say who they have as roommates although applying with a friend or sibling is possible (HOAS, 2022). This effects the popularity of the shared apartments negatively as does the feeling of not having any other housing options available (Heath et al. 2018), as cited by (Haukeland, 2021). The spatial reality does not exactly support communal feeling as each bedroom can only be entered with the occupant's key and the shared kitchen-living room might feel more like a threshold space.

Cohousing and shared living are more common in highly urbanized countries where space is limited and costly close to the working hubs and home ownership hasn't been an option for the young adults. In the UK for instance, students and young people, the so-called 'Generation Rent', are no longer the only ones interested in more affordable shared housing, as there has been a 239% rise in 55- to 64-year-olds looking for shared flats since 2011 according to a flat-sharing site SpareRoom (Morton, 2022). The rental crisis with rocketing housing prices, a shortage on apartments and a climbing cost on living does not only limit to London but rents have increased 3,2% across the UK in 2021 (Hunt, 2022). Regardless of prices out of range for most young people, the Britons hold on to the ideal of homeownership and are discontent with renting and being forced to live in shared flats (McKee; Moore; Soaita; & Crawford, 2017). As in the past, privacy and space speak of higher social status as they are mostly attainable to the financially well-off. Same as in Finland, the aspect of not-having-a-choice makes sharing stigmatized and undesirable, which can on one hand undermine a resident's sense of belonging and local attachment to place. Perhaps on the other, however, the very lack of options, the battle for space and experience in sharing has sprouted forms of self-organized cohousing and co-living, still relatively unfamiliar to Finnish culture. Economic growth, the increased standard of living and the way the Finnish society is organized, might indirectly cause social connections to be less essential in organizing everyday life.

The Finnish housing industry is guided by strong outdated norms, cost-

# Shared Spaces

effective thinking, and few larger operators in the construction sector. The apartments and housing options within the same price range thus often pursue similar architecture, spatial arrangements, and home equipment levels, leaving less choice and room for people to develop and pursue their housing dreams. The apartments are oriented to please an average occupant or an average nuclear family with unchanging needs and living cultures. Communal spatial solutions are mainly found in special housing for elderly or supported living and establishing co-living communities is often a laborious and long process demanding active individuals with large timely, financial, and mental resources initiating and carrying out the undertaking. Communal life is thus not equally available to all the residents who could draw benefits, social or material, from it. (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012).

As my family grew by one, we needed to move out of our one-bedroom apartment as our home was about to be invaded by baby maintenance equipment. We couldn't find a 2-bedroom apartment without its own sauna although, it would be more practical to have a shared one. Firstly, we do not use the sauna too often, secondly it still needs regular cleaning and thirdly, we could've used the space for a larger baby's room or storage space for him. Same with the laundry. The building doesn't have a shared one, hence on top of acquiring all the baby equipment, we were forced to buy a new washing machine. Therefore, we have even less room in the bath and the diaper changing station had to be placed in the living room.

Path dependency, a phenomenon in which decisions and practices established in the past guide or constrain later decisions and outcomes, is visible in the Finnish housing industry and maneuvers the dwellers' housing preferences. The past of frugal and cramped rural living, the culture of self-reliance, late industrialization and urbanization, and low socioeconomic differences have together with the Finnish housing policies had their bearing on the housing market. They still impact "the produced housing forms, housing stock, apartment sizes, housing typology, construction methods, apartment décor and financing operators for housing" of Finland today (Juntto, 2010, ss. 18-19). Unfortunately, our housing pathways, colored by our history, often neglect present environmental values, and hinder the advancement of sharing economies in housing. Taxation has for example favored home ownership and the tax deduction right for commuting encourages detached housing beyond the reach of public

## 4.3

## 4.4

transport. Path dependency is also visible in the Finnish vigor to demolish instead of renovating especially 60s, 70s and 80s buildings to make way for contemporary construction as we tend to glorify new over old. The Finnish housing stock is among the youngest in Europe and the rapidly reached higher standard of living with late industrialization and still ongoing urbanization has established a basis for a throwaway society. The single-use culture lives strong in interior design as well. (Kolkwitz, 2020; Juntto, 2010).

In Finnish apartment housing history, the resident hasn't had much chance of influencing the construction outcome. This also pushes towards home ownership and even detached housing as people in general have a wish to control their living surroundings and shape the spaces to fit their needs and situations (Juntto, 2010). Not everyone has the equal chances or resources for this, and one might say home has become the embodiment of the socioeconomical status. Since the beginning of 2000s the Finnish attitudes have gone through a shift from appreciation of practicality to holding aesthetics and distinctiveness in esteem in housing. Individualization and autonomy are important for residents to feel spatial ownership. Home is a continuation of a person's material self-image and identity is often built by investing in the goods and emblems expressing differentiation or identification to certain values or lifestyles. (Juntto, 2010).

Practices based on consumption and growth are thus embedded into our housing pathways, but also contain problems connected to equality and sustainability. Does every generation have the right to rebuild and redecorate their apartments to suit their life situation and what does that mean for the environment? Path dependency has created subconscious tendencies and values which need informed, mindful updating. Wouldn't it be possible to build our identities around climate friendly practices in finding alternatives to continuous consumption and focus our efforts in developing sharing economies? In the face of current global threats, I'd say we need to invest in planetarian existence and communal resilience.

### 4.4 Concluding Words

Having discussed the generalized Finnish nature at length, it is due to underline how ludicrous it is to cater housing solutions only to the imagined typical Finn. Native Finns among themselves have contrasting needs and



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ideals on housing, and the rising number of immigrants, their disparate life situations, the changes in demographics and in living cultures are all leading to more diversified residential preferences (Juntto, 2010).

I have earlier summed up the skeptic replies and arguments against sharing, gathered from the personnel interviews and resident survey, part of the Housing in Change research project. The survey was carried out in the first winter into COVID-19 pandemic and it is very likely that the novel threat and the exceptional times colored people's replies. On one hand the shared practices, neighbors and common spaces were missed but on the other, human contact was considered a health risk and most social activities and events were under restrictions or cancelled altogether at the time. (Lehtinen, ym., 2022). It is also natural that the property management staff expressed worries about the resident conflicts connected to shared spaces, as that would add to their workload and require participation and additional social skills in settling disputes. According to positive psychology author and instructor Taina Laane, it is easier for people to count out and recognize threats and difficulties as it is part of our evolutionary survival code. In the social context, we are more vigilant to observe warning signals and avoid blunders and conflict for the fear of being cast out and losing the protection of the pack. (Jaalamaa, 2020; Hongisto, 2022).

Generally, the residential opinion in the survey cannot be summed up to be against shared spaces as there were plenty of people talking about their positive encounters with neighbors and some longed for more communality in their housing complex. Many reported to have cut down the use of common spaces where close human contact was hard to avoid but expressed a wish to be able book the same common space for themselves to ease the time of restrictions that prevented the use of public social infrastructures, hobby- and sport facilities. Many had experienced loneliness prior the pandemic, to some the need for casual social contact increased since the beginning of COVID-19. Overall, the pandemic opened eyes of the respondents to the possibilities and importance of versatile and appealing in- and outdoor areas as extension of their homes and felt that those added to their wellbeing and resilience in exceptional times. Social infrastructure like park benches, canopies, jogging trails and activities like bringing the dog for a walk in the nearby nature supported the residents otherwise lessened social interaction and raised the chance of meeting a neighbor safely. (Lehtinen, ym., 2022).

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When the situational factors and psychological bias are set aside, I see no credible argumentation against shared spaces in housing. On the contrary, much of the research on sharing economies speaks of the multiple gains architecturally, economically, environmentally, and socially as well as of the benefits to the individuals' health and wellbeing (Haukeland, 2021; Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012; Hyödynmaa, 2020; Lehtinen, ym., 2022; Madanipour, 2020; Yarker, 2019; Gaining by Sharing AS, 2022). Shared spaces are social infrastructure that battles socioeconomic inequality and aligns with many climate goals by raising resource efficiency. I see it part of the architect's role to push the current standards and introduce new, sometimes experimental spatial solutions to question the established living habits and to discover improved practices. Sharing is not a new phenomenon, but we can do it better and expand the concept.

## 4.5 Learning shared living where diversity fostered sociability

*After I graduated from the Finnish upper secondary, I moved alone to Germany to do language courses, worked two part-time jobs for a year and finally enrolled in Bachelor level architectural studies in a city I had never heard of. I had very small savings, financial aid bureaucracy to battle and a new residence to find within a month's notice, preferably close to the campus. Like many Finnish students, I was determined to live spartan as long as I wouldn't have to share an apartment. I was new to the place, uncertain with the culture and yet to master the language. I wanted a safe space to unwind and didn't like the idea of having to please anyone, be sociable or share chores when at home. Soon however, I learned that I could not afford a whole apartment no matter how small, and as a foreigner I was not reaching the top of very long queues of local students listing to privately owned studio rentals. A room in a shared flat was my only option and to get into those I had to convince the people scouting for their new roommate that I could be charming, tidy, trustworthy, and sociable. Looking for a place to live felt like speed-dating and auditioning for a talent show simultaneously but I managed to find a shared flat with two male students also in their early twenties. It was a nice family apartment with decent people, and I was pleased although I wouldn't have had a choice either way with hundreds of new students flocking the market. We'd share a kitchen, a bathroom, and a tight hallway and each of us had a bedroom to ourselves. The balcony situated in front of my room, but the entrance was through the meant-to-be-living-room i.e., another*

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*bedroom, hence I had to live with the fact that someone could stand in front of my window anytime of the day and trust them not to peer inside. The rent was cheap, the location was excellent and the house rules agreeable. I didn't have to worry about household appliances like a laundry machine, dishwasher, toaster or water kettle, dishes, cutlery, or cleaning equipment as it all had been brought along by the various residents before me. I even received a hand-me-down bicycle as one of my new roommates worked at a volunteer repair shop!*

*Although my financial situation eventually improved, I had already finished my degree and started working in a larger city commuting over two hours daily, I stayed in the shared flat until moving on with my partner six years later. He had moved into one of the vacated rooms eight months into our relationship and we stayed for another 1,5 years. By then I had experienced a change of six different housemates: all of them from different cities, four of them outside my own faculty and none of them like the other. With each of them came a new crowd of acquaintances, friends, stories, disputes, awkward moments, laughter, and memories that mark my time in Germany. I learned the language faster, mastered the spoken- and was helped with the written German and got a closer insight to the culture as I would have living by myself. It wasn't always rosy; I wasn't fond of all the co-residents nor was I the most laid-back roomie but I never felt secluded or unwelcome. We had no living room and the kitchen was too small to dine in, but we sometimes shared meals or hung out in one of the private rooms. Every square meter was thus used very effectively, house parties still took place occasionally and perhaps the fact that we couldn't avoid each other at home, made us more compliant and accommodating as people. I had spells of being social and friendly, and times when I kept to myself and so did my roommates. Thinking back, I learned much about mutual tolerance, empathy, and trust by witnessing varied kinds of private life. I discovered much about myself, of personal limits, and ways of communicating but most importantly, I felt like home.*

## 4.6 Case studies of socially engaged housing architecture

The consecutive three case studies demonstrate sharing on different levels to follow up the discussion on the Nordic housing habits. They were analyzed with media both in print and in digital form through recorded

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interviews, public talks, presentations, building plans and websites. In the case of Annikki, the author was able to visit the cohousing site in Tampere and interview the founding resident Anna Helamaa as well as review her published works on the topic. The housing cases were initially filtered out due to their plentiful common social infrastructure but were finally selected as representatives for their innovative use of collective practices that encourage the formation and upkeep of social capital. The architecture and urban situation of the buildings differ from each other, yet the residents of the cases share similar values, attitudes and aspirations in housing and describe similar experiences of contentment and collective spirit. This notion seems to support the hypothesis whereby neither the housing type nor the high number of residents are obstacles for added wellbeing and communal existence. To which extent are spaces and their qualitative properties responsible for the social activity of the residents? Is a firm social foundation required for the success and high utilization rate of the shared spaces?

## 4.6.1 Vindmøllebakken – Re-activating communal skills

Image 7

Vindmøllebakken courtyard view into shared dining room



Negotiating space, accommodating needs of non-familial others at home, learning away from traditional forms of ownership, and opening

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up to sharing might sound intimidating and laborious tasks to achieve a more sustainable type of living. However, when one lists the human and financial benefits to the environmental gains of Vindmøllebakken, a housing community in Stavanger, Norway one starts to question why such forms of cohousing are only recently, and quite slowly, making their way back to Finnish housing typology (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012). Located at an old industrial site, Vindmøllebakken consists of 40 co-living units, 4 townhouses and 8 apartments constructed entirely out of timber. In the middle of the units, the complex has around 500 square meter shared space with different programs to encourage sharing everyday life and items with one's neighbors and spaces that offer retreat and privacy. (Helen&Hard, 2019).

Image 8  
Vindmøllebakken  
shared dinner



## 4.6.1.1. Places for sharing

The entrance follows through a courtyard into a wide, double-height hallway with mobile planter boxes, large windows and a glazed ceiling that enable plenty of natural light in the space. The most often used shared spaces of an amphitheater connected to the open stairwell, a spacious dining area and a separate communal kitchen are placed right next to the main entrance

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and have easy access and good visual connections to outdoor and indoor spaces. Other shared spaces include three roof terraces, a greenhouse with a view over the city, a living room, rentable guest apartment, a hobby and play corner and a larger lounge area in the basement level with dining tables, seating, a kitchen and a toilet which enable the residents to host guests and private celebrations outside of their snug apartments. The residents also share a laundry room, bike shelter, supporting storage spaces and possess private storages on the ground floor.

The apartments surround the common areas, and their doors have different color codes according to floor number and to indicate whether they access to private or shared spaces for easy orientation. Residents have the options to either walk through common areas or enter from the street to their apartments, which together with visual connections provide the freedom to choose when and how often to engage in the communal life. (Archello, 2019; DOGA, 2021).

## 4.6.1.2 Gaining by Sharing

Vindmøllebakken is a pilot project for the Gaining by Sharing model, developed by the architectural office Helen&Hard together with Indigo Vekst and Gaia Trondheim. The model combines their high-held values of social, ecological, economic and architectural quality and aims to create environmentally and socially sustainable communities based around communal ways of living. In practice, residents agree to have smaller private apartments and choose to invest in the ownership of shared spaces, items and functions they otherwise couldn't or needn't afford alone. By sharing more, one can own less, and get a financial gain. Ecologically, there is less excess and more efficient use of resources. Socially, the residents have their own architecturally qualitative private housing but can also experience belonging to a social community in their everyday life and gain wellbeing from the reciprocal practices. (Gaining by Sharing AS, 2022).

## 4.6.1.3 Building a home and a community

Moving into cohousing demands often personal effort, active participation, and an open mind from those who wish to engage in a functioning community. The architects of the project are themselves residents in

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Vindmøllebakken and early in the process organized a series of seminars and workshops to present their concept to the curious, ensuring people felt involved and knew what they were buying into (Helen&Hard, 2019). The informative events enabled people to share their questions, concerns and ideas of cohousing and get comfortable with the idea of sharing. They also got a chance to get acquainted with possible cohousing mates and develop understanding about how they and others felt about things, catch on their varied motivations, develop empathy towards different life situations, and discover how to best communicate and negotiate values and rules within the group.

Image 9  
Vindmøllebakken  
dweller workshop



In the second phase of the project, the first buyers were involved in the planning process and could influence the design of their individual housing units and suggest functions to the common spaces. The apartments are therefore unique but also attractive for resale. The project was especially designed to enable affordable prices for families with children, so they too had a chance to buy. Today the residents consist of people with different cultural backgrounds and ages, from single residents to couples to families with children living in or visiting their families. The process of getting to know each other is ongoing as finding consensus can take time; however,

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the housing members understand it as part of the interaction and cohesion, and they learn much about each other on the way. (DOGA, 2021; Archello, 2019).

## 4.6.1.4 Managing communal life

The first residents of Vindmøllebakken formed 22 interest groups upon moving in, to manage the use and the different tasks connected to the shared spaces and communal life happening in them. The self-organized groups include for example a kitchen group, a gardening group, a car-sharing group and an art-curating group. There is also a group organizing the shared finances and a group which looks after good social and relational practices and help the community to sort out differences, negotiate space and learn from their challenges (Archello, 2019).

These skills came in handy when in 2020, a year after the project was completed and the residents had moved in, the COVID-19 pandemic landed in Europe. By then they had established rules to coexist and began using communication platforms that added to their effective resilience abilities. A COVID-management group was formed. The mutual trust, and communal experience enabled the community of Vindmøllebakken to reorganize their common spaces so that they could continue to meet in smaller groups and with safety distances while the rest of the world was forced to social isolation. They were able to adjust their rules, trust everyone to respect them and know they'd receive support from the community if the need arose (ACAN FIN, 2021).

Image 10  
Vindmøllebakken courtyard  
concert during COVID-19





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In a public talk organized by the Finnish Architects Climate Action Network (ACAN), the architect Siv Helene Stangeland from Helen&Hard, mentions how somewhere deep and perhaps forgotten we all actually know how to live with other people, and have a sense of what it means to be a part of a community. “We just need to reactivate that skill again.” (ACAN FIN, 2021).

## 4.6.2 Annikki – Starting from scratch, guided by a common goal



The second case study of sharing practices in housing focuses on the specifics of negotiating space in Annikki co-housing community in Tampere, Finland. The two-story wooden city block was originally built in 1909 and last renovated in 2012. The community of well-mixed resident demographics

Image 11

Annikki co-housing and surrounding neighbourhood

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house altogether 23 apartments, varying from 23 – 140 square meters, and around 170 sqm of shared spaces. Social spaces like sauna, the accompanying living room, and a second-floor open space with a kitchen are located at the center of the block in a shared building surrounded by the common courtyard. Along with utility spaces of laundry, potato cellar and storages, the residents have the option to rent a studio apartment in the block for guests wishing to stay overnight.

Annikki, has in its past been long under a demolition threat being located in an area prearranged for a public park in the 1966 city plan. With prolonged civil activism to protect the buildings as well as Annikki's cultural and communal value to the neighborhood, the city block finally managed to become a listed building in 2006. Annikki was then put out to tender with an obligation to be renovated by the buyer and was obtained in 2011 by a group of private investors, looking to create homes in a co-housing community for themselves.

Even before the purchase, it was clear that the partners needed to establish a common language and draft ground rules for communication. If they were to succeed in forming a collective and managing the renovation, everyone needed to find trust in each other, be ready to take on risks, make compromises and to put their shared objectives before their own. The partners were not only responsible for paying and designing their own apartments but also in deciding over the shared spaces, the building façade, house technics, corporate structures of their newly founded housing co-operative and communal practices. The physical work of demolition, construction and renovation was carried out partly by the residents themselves and the project thus demanded plenty of time and commitment. On the other hand, it gave them the opportunity to impact the plan implementation and quality of their homes and the joint effort and goal also helped to form a solid foundation for living together later on, establishing understanding of each other. (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012; Torvinen, 2012).

## 4.6.2.1 Written rules and prosocial proceedings

Architect and researcher Anna Helamaa has studied various forms of collaborative housing in Europe and has first-hand experience in living in the cohousing community of Annikki. According to Helamaa, the character of

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the community is dependent on the residents and conflicts can be avoided with empathy. One needs to develop acceptance how there will always be some people who do not have the energy or will to participate, as there are also people who often contribute more than the others. Responsibilities are to be shared equally, rotated occasionally and it is good to remember that everyone has different methods and ways of seeing the work done. It is important therefore to avoid piling and hoarding responsibilities on specific members and trust that others are also able to carry out those tasks and allow them to perform in peace. (Helamaa, Sitoutuminen ja vastuu asuinyhteisössä, 2013).

In the MONIKKO project report on the varied forms and realization of collaborative housing (2012), the establishment and role of rules are discussed. The tendency to avoid or minimize written rules is preferred by most cohousing communities. People's behavior is therefore guided by social expectation, trust and regard among neighbors. Although cohousing often involves obligations and commitment; sanctions and punishment are not commonly practiced. Usually, the social pressure is enough to do the trick. (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012). When facing disagreement or conflict, the person's involved should try to solve the situation through open communication and means of diplomacy. According to Helamaa (2022), anonymous notes, nursing a grievance, resentful gossip and lodging a formal complaint through property manager or even police as means of confrontation are toxic for communal spirit. Same as in the example case of Vindmøllebakken; by providing the residents a chance for casual and regular neighborly encounter in gardening, joint saunas, common spaces or work bee events, it becomes easier to negotiate differences within the community of Annikki. (Helamaa, Communal practices in Annikki cohousing community, 2022).

## 4.6.2.2. The role of language in establishing and negotiating spatial behavior

Upon moving in a cohousing community of around 50 people, the members decided to draw up a "Resident's manual" to manage the use of shared spaces and secure a continuum of shared activities. The collective physical setting and long house establishing process had already brought the neighbors together and taught them about each other, yet they were

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very pragmatic about wanting to create written down guidelines as social foundations. The language and style of the document was discussed in detail as many wished to avoid creating a list of restrictive regulations and intimidating rules.

In the manual the communal life, their most cherished values and practices are described with the aim to encourage and motivate certain behavior, instead of limiting and prohibiting specific actions. It does contain some rules as well, like how one is not to practice commercial activity in the shared common room, but the wording is more often recommending instead of commanding. The used language and tone of the manual hence plays an important role in forming coherent social life as it impacts somewhat how residents respond to the rules and how they communicate with each other about following them.

Image 12

Annikki courtyard  
poetry festival



In Annikki, the residents are to use the shared spaces like they would their own, but also to recognize the spaces as part of someone else's home. In practice, one can invite guests and organize private events with the thumb rule of inviting people one would be comfortable in having in one's

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private quarters as well. The manual reads like a light leaflet sprinkled with photos and drawings by the community members picturing themselves in joint activities. Practical for newcomers, it entails description of the shared spaces and items available, enlightens about the house meeting policies, includes explanations to the house technics and the maintenance intervals and procedures of special equipment like the sprinkler system. (Helamaa, Communal practices in Annikki cohousing community, 2022).

Becoming part of a community and establishing reciprocal social networks, means agreeing to diversity and the responsibility of respecting and accepting difference. With communal life one commits to rules of democratic interaction, is able to listen to opposing views and also express one's own opinion. One doesn't need to agree on everything, but it is important to acknowledge that some things mean more to others than they might to oneself and vice versa. (Helamaa, Sitoutuminen ja vastuu asuinyhteisössä, 2013). Today, Annikki residents are not limiting their prosocial values only for the benefit of their own cohousing community but aim to continue the tradition of organizing culturally and socially enriching events, concerts, flea market and poetry festival open to people outside the city block. Annikki can therefore be considered a piece of vitalizing social infrastructure for the entire neighborhood of Tammela.



Image 13

Annikki flea market

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## 4.6.3 Jyrkkälä – Communal life among concrete blocks

The third example case of successful integration of communal practices and social infrastructure within housing is Jyrkkälä, a 70's block house suburb in Turku, Finland. The housing complex consists altogether of 17 apartment buildings, around 600 rental flats and about 1300 residents. It came third in the contest for The Best Living Environment in the Nordic Countries in 2022 (NBO, 2022; Lätti, 2022). Judging by outer appearances, Jyrkkälä doesn't immediately resemble the other contestants with its monotonous concrete block group close to an intersection of two motorways despite the closing strip of forest greenery. In the competition, however, attention was paid to sieve out housing projects where people, nature, architecture, and activities are successful in creating communal life and increasing the residential feelings of belonging, safety and wellbeing.

Image 14

Jyrkkälä suburb in Turku



Jyrkkälä has in the past suffered from the reputation of a restless suburb troubled by drug abuse and small criminality (Leppänen, 2022). The reputation is strongly linked to its heritage as the building complex was

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originally financed with government support to provide rental flats to working-class families moving to the area from different parts of Finland. In comparison, a nearby suburb of Suikkila built at the same time was partly financed by relatively well-off people buying their own apartments, meaning the flats and buildings were generously equipped, the area was widely marketed and hence considered a neighborhood for the wealthy higher class. Jyrkkälä originally housed around 2500 people in a tighter building ensemble and when the youth of large families came together in the early 70's, their surroundings didn't yet offer any services, activities or social places to spend time, leaving them to loiter in hallways and stairwells. (Talonen;Laaksonen;& Aalto, 2021).

The area has however, been actively developed since then and Jyrkkälä also reached first place in a resident satisfaction survey in 2019 (Kiinteistöposti, 2022). The latest renovation the building complex has gone through finished in 2018, and it included a new color scheme and paneling for the facades, renewed windows, heat recovery system for the ventilation systems and solar panels on two house ends. The housing company has also invested in creating seven common spaces with varied furnishing to accommodate diverse uses and developed the outdoor areas to activate different age groups and resident types within the buildings. There is no parking or car traffic inside the blocks, to enable more greenery, peace and safety for people, pets and wildlife to move about. Much of the trees and plants have been chosen and planted by the resident committees along the years and the vegetation is thus diverse and plentiful. The usual utility spaces of laundry, drying room and storage are accompanied by public saunas and Smartpost services. Most shared spaces are accessible to all around the clock, some the residents can book for themselves free of charge, the sauna shifts cost a bit of extra and for some spaces the users can acquire access against a refundable deposit. (Kiinteistöposti, 2022; Jyrkkälänpolku Ltd., 2022). Today, neighbors greet each other, the maintenance staff stops by to chat with the residents and there are plenty of attractive social infrastructure and activities for the community to enjoy both in- and outdoors.

# 4.6

## 4.6.3.1 Looking after physical and social properties of shared spaces

There are three larger shared living rooms on the ground floor of resident buildings F, B and VXY. The spaces are named Folkke, Bertta and Vexi to undoubtedly ease the orientation but which also make them somewhat more approachable by giving them the air of pleasant casualness beyond the unembellished and impersonal “club room F”. On the housing company’s webpage, the spaces are all mentioned to have their own barrier free entrance, bathrooms, and secured storage possibilities followed by a short description of their varied equipment level and furnishing. The cheery phrasing of the webpage also sidenotes ideas for pastimes the spaces are suited for hosting. (Jyrkkälänpolku Ltd., 2022).

Image 15  
Jyrkkälä’s Folkke  
shared living-room



Three smaller shared spaces (Elli, Alli and Consta) are located on the ground floor of houses A, C and E and have each their separate barrier free entrance and water access. The varying furnishing suggests one of the spaces suited for meetings or a game night around a table, the other for informal workshopping or a book club on sofas, and the last one accommodates crafting over a workbench. The seventh space simply named Asukastupa, resident’s living room, resonates an image of a common meeting spot, when one wishes to socialize with others. All of the shared spaces mentioned above, are available to be rented for private occasions but are also used to host various weekly events like bingo, Thursday quiz, family cafés, board game sessions and food aid for those in need along the occasional but reoccurring workshops on digital media skills or taking one’s own blood pressure.



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Image 16

Jyrkkälä community barbecue

The diversity of shared spaces in Jyrkkälä inspires to wonder whether similar spatial adaptation and arrangement could be feasible in other apartment block neighbourhoods as well. Most Finnish apartment block housing from the 70's onwards was built with similar combination of utility spaces with the occasional club room (Talonen;Laaksonen;& Aalto, 2021). If the neighbouring housing companies could find a way to share those spaces with each other, a wider variety of could be achieved by for example turning some drying rooms into a crafting space, a music room or a gym for the residents. Naturally, this would demand a change not only in the housing companies' mind-set and property management practices but also on the planning regulation level. (Maununaho, 2021).

## 4.6.3.2 Utilizing the resident capital

The key to success has been the real estate Ltd. Jyrkkälänpolku's vigor in improving the suburb together with the residents. They have realized how participation and well-maintained surroundings support people's wellbeing and are therefore actively involved in helping to form communal life and creating opportunities for residents to join in. For the company resident experience and innovation are important to take into account

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and even when all ideas of the resident committee are not executed, they are still noted, discussed and processed together. “Jyrkkälä has taught me, that often it is not a question of providing, say just a park bench. That bench might be a decisive factor for someone to go outside of their apartment. It then plays a bigger role for that person’s wellbeing”, property manager and CEO of the housing company Lauri Ahonen elaborates. (Ahonen;Granö;Willberg;Hyytiä;& Säteri, 2022).

Together with resident committee the housing company has realized outdoor activities such as a petangue court, an outdoor gym, a skatepark, an insect meadow, a dog park and resident sustained flower boxes in the summer. The communal events, sometimes in collaboration with third sector organizations, include for example a sprinkler hour for the children on hot summer days, festive light art for the Finnish Independence Day, and an occasional breakfast or lunch prepared by a local volunteer association in one of the shared living rooms. (Leppänen, 2022). The opportunity to shape one’s surroundings enables the residents to gain ownership of their neighborhood and feel at home.

Image 17

Jyrkkälä opening celebration  
after renovation



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## 4.6.3.3 Cost-effectiveness of communality

Such dedication naturally creates additional costs for the housing company yet as Aaltonen explains, the resident wellbeing also comes at a price and the company invests in the area to keep it well-liked and -lived, meaning that the apartments never stand empty for long but are continuously in-demand. In a good, functioning community the residents also look after each other, loneliness is reduced, and neighborly help flourishes. “The suburb is not maintained from the office but among the residents” Ahonen underlines and continues “One needs to be firm but friendly and as a property manager one needs empathy. This means one needs to be able to listen, to step into the other person’s shoes and understand that when we get a notice or a complaint from a resident, the situation they’re experiencing is very true to them and it is our responsibility to react accordingly”. (Mikä tekee lähiöstä viihtyisän ja yhteisöllisen? – kysytään Turun Jyrkkälästä, 2022).



Image 18

Jyrkkälä residents can sign up for a summer flower duty where they are responsible for choosing, planting and caring for their designated flowerbed. This provides the garden a function and not mere decorations

In Jyrkkälä, a familiar and small maintenance team provide a sense of safety and permanence in the area and an opportunity for a friendly encounter (Leppänen, 2022). Regularity and known faces provide links between the residents and encourage participation. The reciprocal practices and social capital strengthen the community, its resilience and create a sense of belonging. In Jyrkkälä, home is not limited within one’s own four walls and the social infrastructure divided among the different buildings expand from indoor shared spaces to outside hotspots.

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## 4.7 Concluding Words

The presented three housing cases, all vary in size, typology, and resident orientation from each other, and they all show-case sharing on different levels. They were chosen as successful examples of communal architecture and sharing in a Nordic context, and because they all are rich in the number of common facilities. These shared spaces were often of high quality, situated practically to enable easy, barrier free access and are attracting the residents to use and shape them according to their needs. What is interesting however, when discussing the wellbeing of the residents and how satisfied they were with their living surroundings, is that the descriptions were more focused on social capital and the immaterial features like the communal atmosphere and opportunities for participation, rather than on the physical architecture. This, however, could naturally be due to the topical bias of the interviewers and because the literature and media found on the cases, mainly hyped the positive social aspects of the housing communities. Then again, if the spatial aspects are well managed and planned, they do not stand out as much as sociality-obstructing architecture might.

In the usual construction procedure, the architect's role has merely seen to the planning of the layout, outer appearance, and overall functionality of the shared spaces. They are responsible in creating attractive and accessible rooms and their work is considered done before the spaces are actually taken to service. The planners seldomly return to the site to see their designs in action or to reassess the spatial decisions made. The housing company is mainly responsible in providing those physical facilities and organizing personnel to see to their spatial maintenance and cleanliness. The residents are thus often left to their own devices in discovering the completed space, to claim ownership and negotiate rules with their known or unknown neighbors. In some cases, this doesn't happen at all. As Finnish buildings often include both owner-occupied and rental flats, not everyone is even aware of the shared spaces in the building upon moving in if the private party selling or renting isn't familiar with the spaces and practices themselves (Lehtinen, ym., 2022).

Vindmøllebakken is a great example of contemporary architecture making the most of its material and human resources in the planning phase and in its operating state, as the residents are active in looking after the physical spaces as well as the communal life within. Same can be said about

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Annikki's co-housing example, although the building itself dates further back and the shared spaces were added much later. In both cases, however, the residents' involvement from the early stages of the project has been crucial in establishing a functioning community. Not only did the residents work on their social capital by coming to regular contact with each other, but they worked towards a shared goal and by being able to individualize their housing units, had the feeling of being heard and make a difference. For their shared spaces the residents in Vindmøllebakken and in Annikki were not only collectively deciding of the spatial program but were as well either making, buying or repairing secondhand furniture and interior décor for the spaces. Granted, both projects had a unique setting, timetable and opportunity to accommodate participation but as seen in Jyrkkälä, there are lessons to be learned and ways applicable to sharing, involvement and space customization in regular apartment building communities as well.

With Vindmøllebakken and Annikki the resident participation did not finish with the completion of the building, but residents formed groups and shared areas of responsibilities according to their interests and time they could invest. This practice is common also in other collaborative housing examples around Europe to keep the communal life rolling (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012). Regular apartment housing companies have more residents than a cohousing community might, but the size of the housing group is by no means a limiting factor, nor is it directly tied to the feelings of communality. Of large communities approximately one third of the members participate actively in joint actions, the second third participates mostly, and the rest might randomly join in, if at all. (Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012). From a planner's viewpoint, it is interesting to ponder whether there is a way to help residents to easier discover shared facilities and encourage their use to be included in their everyday lives. Could the visual connections or the disposition of the spaces make them more inviting to all and add the number of social encounters also to those less willing to formally participate?

The community building process is supported by the existence of a number of different kinds of indoor and outdoor spaces suitable for spontaneous encounter and seeing there is something for everyone. Architect and project researcher Katja Maununaho (2021) points out how mental images differ between people and prejudice can affect the reception of social infrastructure and its use negatively, even though the space aims

# 4.7

for inclusion. She continues how social barriers might form from false assumptions like when the space is perceived to host only a certain type of clientele, and which could shy away a person who is not familiar with the space and its practices. (Maununaho, 2021). Jyrkkälä's housing company has been addressing such barriers by collaborating with third sector services organising and communicating about activities and events which are directed to different user groups and are hosted in house own shared spaces. Through this the residents' interest and comfort in visiting the spaces is ensured and spaces have a greater chance in stabilizing themselves as part of daily life.

Image 19  
gardening work bees in Tammela



Communication channels play an important role in reaching different residents and the larger the community, the more mediums are needed. The youngest, nor the oldest residents may have access to digital mediums of Whatsapp, Facebook or Instagram, and notice boards, letters and office staff that inform of communal life are important to guarantee everyone is included. This was noted by all three housing communities, although they expressed having faced difficulties in keeping up various media (Ahonen,

# Shared Spaces

Granö, Willberg, Hyytiä, & Säteri, 2022; Helamaa, 2022; ACAN FIN, 2021). In the Finnish case studies, attention was also paid to language and tone to communicate about social practices, rules, and spaces' management between the residents themselves and between housing company and the residents. An encouraging phrasing accompanied by suggestions for the activities that could take place in the house own social infrastructure were felt to increase prosocial behavior and trust, to invite participation and lower the threshold to use the shared spaces. Top-down approaches and atmosphere were avoided collectively.

The type of housing shouldn't restrict good practices of forming a sense of togetherness and attachment to one's surroundings. Social events like voluntary work bees (Finnish: talkoot), weekly joint saunas (lenkkisauna), and participation in resident committees have been a traditional part of apartment house life in Finland and therefore a familiar way for neighbors to connect and contribute (Museovirasto, 2021; ARA, 2008; Maununaho, 2021). Why have those practices lost their shine to residents? I doubt we've been aware of the consequences of investing in higher equipment level of private apartments where everyone has their own saunas and laundry machines, or of house maintenance being outsourced to companies rather than being divided among the residents. Could it be that this raised standard of living does not automatically equal to a raised quality of life?

Democratic discussion-based decision making, low hierarchy and openness are the corner stones of a functioning cohousing community and can also be applied to the modus operandi of the resident committees and their relationship with the housing company. Shared saunas might offer a better chance to break away from daily grind, while physically changing scenery and meeting people outside of the spheres of work and home. Work bees in the end, are not so much about the work itself but about the opportunity to influence, for neighbors to meet each other and to have pride and sense of achievement in the joint effort done for the wellbeing of the community. (ARA, 2008; Maununaho, 2021). In apartment buildings where neighbors are still mostly unknown to each other, it is enough to start small. A space that facilitates coming together and self-organizing might be the decisive element in initiating the change and fostering the effort. As written above, prosocial behavior and community values catch on (Saari, 2016).

# 5

## 5.1

This chapter is dedicated to the discussion on the short and long-standing impacts of the still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on the social infrastructure and shared spaces. I intend to briefly revise on how the novel threat was received by the public, what the situation looked like in Finland and reflect on the spatial measures we chose to protect ourselves with. Is the current pandemic likely to cause permanent changes to our housing needs and the use of social spaces? What can spatial planners do to help the public to prepare for future disasters? As the immediate and disastrous impacts of climate crisis and the rapid decrease of biodiversity on Earth might not have touched the average Finn, the global pandemic, war in Ukraine, looming financial recession, energy crisis and the rising cost-of-living are by now actively testing individual and communal resilience.

Architectural and urban planning developments and spatial solutions have throughout history been driven by great societal changes, health related discoveries and threats to the human wellbeing. For example, in the appearance of malaria, cholera and tuberculosis in the 19th century cities, attention in urban planning turned to realize the importance of nature, fresh air, sunlight and hygienic standards to the public health both in the housing neighborhood and on the apartment level (Blumberg, 2020). Until then diseases had been able to spread in the cramped living spaces and unhygienic conditions of the poorest, who often bore the stigma and were blamed for their miserable situation (Fezi, 2020). The present-day values and attitudes do not differ much from the past. In the YH Kodit housing survey, residents listed the very same attributes of daylight, pleasant view into nature, good air quality and spaciousness when asked about apartment qualities they felt were enhancing their mental wellbeing in the exceptional



# Pandemic Bearing on Shared Spaces

times. The replies also expressed feelings of insecurity, stress, loneliness, and longing, when discussing their relationship to their often-unknown neighbors. Those ‘others’, were sometimes perceived health-endangering, as they were felt to ignore the communal good conduct and the rules related to virus management. In short, where the community was missing; seclusion, mistrust and prejudice ruled the social atmosphere. However, the people who reported positive experiences on giving or receiving neighborly help, or generally had plenty of qualitative social connections in their life, seemed overall more satisfied and secure in their replies (Lehtinen, et al., 2022).

Architecture and the built environment have the power to enable or limit social systems, behaviour and human movement. As density and social interactions play an evident role in virus transmission, rethinking and studying space becomes a necessity, if we are to prepare for future pandemics. With the current medical and digital advances, rapid communication methods and global cooperation on our side, knowledge-based decisions can ease the fear and enable proportionate measures where complete isolation and confinement can be avoided. The socioeconomic preconditions of people facing sudden insecurity and a change in routines, highly influence their tangible assets, mental resources, and the general ability to adapt their everyday life. By cutting off social infrastructure and diminishing “unnecessary” social contacts, meant that people removed much of the balance bringing, supportive and restorative connections from their lives. Social infrastructure supports teamwork, mental balance, and communal wellbeing. How can we keep those assets running in times of crises? How can we identify and overcome the barriers hindering their use?

## 5.1 On how the COVID pandemic separated us and hit social capital

The corona virus pandemic landed in Finland in the early 2020 and the slowly but steadily rising numbers of COVID-19 infections led soon to the implement of the Emergency Powers Act in mid-March by the Finnish Government (YLE, 2020a). Social infrastructures and physical contact to other people were proclaimed a grave health risk which led to the ban of gatherings and closing of state provided public facilities such as museums, libraries, hobby facilities, youth clubs and swimming pools. This was also

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recommended to spaces and events by third sector organizations and religious congregations. Loitering and dispensable activities outside home were to be stopped to detain the propagation of the virus. (YLE, 2020a). The preventative actions were promptly adopted by housing companies and cooperatives, which decided to close either some or all of the shared facilities that risked voluntary social contact including club rooms, saunas, gyms and hobby spaces. The use of necessary housekeeping spaces like storage rooms and laundry, was advised to be kept to a minimum with heightened hygiene practices and keeping a distance to one's neighbors. At the time, there was still very little of confirmed results on the level and length of exposure needed to catch the virus, on how long the germs remained airborne, survived on surfaces and the ways in which the virus could be effectively removed from interior spaces. The atmosphere of uncertainty, the mass of unfiltered information by various media but also the lack of sufficient communication on how to cope, was weighing heavily on people facing a new threat and many felt fearful, vulnerable and left alone (WHO, 2022). Other epidemiologic methods such as restrictions on movement in form of isolation, quarantines, sectorization, physical distancing together with protective equipment like masks, sanitizers, disinfectants and hygiene procedures like repetitive hand washing, covered coughing and sneezing became rapidly the new normal. (THL, 2020a; Valtanen, 2022).

### 5.2 Social infrastructure as a leveler of socioeconomic inequality

Next to immediate danger to the public-physical-health, the pandemic threatens in the long run to deepen the socioeconomic differences. The place of a person's origin and residential neighborhood are also in Finland strongly connected to the dimensions of health and welfare and the negative impacts of a crisis are often felt the strongest by those already in a vulnerable position (THL, 2020b). The inequalities reach from financial aspects and money enabled possibilities to disparity in the physical and mental resilience. People with lower socioeconomic background are more likely to suffer from primary diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart- and respiratory diseases, making them often part of the COVID risk group and exposed to the graver symptoms of the virus. The same people are statistically likelier to work jobs where teleworking from home and avoiding human contact during the workday is not possible. (THL, 2020c). Lower income households are also more exposed to labor

# Pandemic Bearing on Shared Spaces

market fluctuation and prone to financial vulnerability and anxiety. In the case of the pandemic, the government implied restrictions, closing and limiting of services caused stress of survival on many small businesses, followed by a wave of temporary layoffs and unemployment. The worry over the health of oneself and one's family, was for many thus coupled up with long-range financial troubles.

How was the change visible in low-income families? Inequality during the first waves of the pandemic reached children as the closing of schools left some of them without a daily warm meal and harmed their learning if they didn't have a calm space at home and didn't receive the support they might have needed. (THL, 2020b). By restricting the social infrastructure of children, public places such as schools, playgrounds, hobby spaces, parks and transitory spaces, left many a child to an unsafe home, stripped of social connections outside or in cramped conditions that now needed to house all family members in additional activities without a chance for privacy. Even after the restrictions on hobby spaces were lifted, not all families have been able to resume their routines as the cost-of-living was, and is still, on the rise (YLE, 2022b).

According to research, financial support for families facing economic hardship is not enough but social services and support are needed to steer through big life changes and to prevent multi-generational deprivation (Bask, et al., 2021). Ideally, the young would receive help to disturbances directly during their growth and development and learn to use and rely on the health services should the need arise. However, the amount of youth receiving outpatient treatment to psychiatric causes has grown all over Finland in the recent years and the already overstrained care system has been driven to crisis and decreased the level of care during the pandemic. (Koivuranta & YLE, 2021). Additionally, many third sector associations and volunteer groups supporting those in need, faced difficulties to operate or were forced to pause their services while fighting for public funding leaving people to their own devices (Kuntalehti, 2020).

Along support services, the important daily contacts outside home were thus cut back and the diminished physical presence meant additional screen time for many adults and children. However, digital communication cannot fully replace physical socializing and spontaneous encounters. Not everyone possesses the technical skills or equipment to stay in touch with their friends and relations online, a situation faced more often by the

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aging population. Physical distancing and restrictions have increased loneliness and unwanted social isolation for many elderly, as assistance and encouragement to get outdoors, maintain physical capability and help with telecommunication devices has not been available. (THL, 2020c; O'Sullivan, et al., 2021).



Image 20  
performance art in Annikki  
during the pandemic

For all age groups, radical changes in daily life, boredom, and decrease in physical exercise can lead to low spirits and grow into increased mental problems, social exclusion, disturbances in social interactions, substance abuse or even domestic violence (THL, 2020d; Hiilamo, et al., 2021; WHO, 2022). The disadvantages and their consequences increased along the pandemic and are likely to cause long-living problems in the society. Holistic support system together with a reliable social network is very important

# Pandemic Bearing on Shared Spaces

to prevent the birth of overgeneration problem chains and expansion of problems for especially to those families and individuals who were already struggling before the pandemic (Kuntalehti, 2020; Bask, et al., 2021; Hiilamo, et al., 2021). Social infrastructure plays a key role in supporting people in times of change, bringing different social classes under one roof, and providing all equal opportunities of refuge and mental relief.

## 5.3 On social resilience management in times of crisis

When it comes to the resilience management of the current crisis, the social side effects tend to be overlooked by the epidemiologic approach and economical worry (Fezi, 2020). The discussion about the infrastructure and service disruption, inflated prices, crisis-induced state deficit and poverty, human mobility deterioration and the necessity of containment interventions focuses to assess the recovery of basic societal functions (Massaro, et al., 2018). It does not, however, emphasize how an epidemic and its mitigation might impact society on the psychological level. The real cost of social distancing, lock downs, and restriction of leisure and sport activities on health and wellbeing will be revealed over time (Fezi, 2020). Several studies on the psychological impact of isolation in quarantine report mainly negative effects including post-traumatic stress symptoms, emotional disturbance, depression, stress, low mood, irritability, insomnia, emotional exhaustion, confusion and anger. The loss of day-to-day routine along with lessened social and physical contact with others caused boredom, frustration and sense of isolation from the rest of the world. (Brooks, et al., 2020; WHO, 2022). Even in Finland, where the restrictions haven't been as rigorous, distancing and the health threat people posed to each other has been reported to cause mistrust in others and the uncertainty has become visible as disputes, heightened irritability, and misconduct towards fellow humans (Kuparinen, 2020).

The COVID pandemic has revealed many weak spots globally in social structures and been an eye-opener to the wide spectrum of factors contributing to human health. Physical, mental, behavioral, social, and environmental health and wellbeing are the foundation to overall resilience to prepare for threats and preserve human welfare (NPRSB, 2015). Perhaps we do not need to compromise social contacts entirely nor replace them with digital presence, should pandemics become more frequent in

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the future? Then again, feeling adrift, loss of routines and sense of isolation are not only consequences of a global disaster but greet many of us at some phase of life possibly in aging and retirement, in unemployment, as a young person leaving the school system, or as a newcomer moving cities or even countries. It is the social capital we rely on in times of turmoil and change. The need for attractive, inviting, and inclusive shared spaces which provide meaningful activities and social contacts is highlighted. (Maununaho;Puumala;& Luoma-Halkola, 2021).

Resilience is a term referring to a system's ability to tolerate, absorb, adapt to and recoil from adversity. Social resilience is about the individuals and communities' competence to persist in daily challenges and to overcome major crises such as natural disasters and epidemics. Along with knowing how to handle and survive threats, the abilities to learn from them and anticipate future change is vital. (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). Nevertheless, social resilience should be regarded as a dynamic process rather than a personal characteristic, as situations can arise and develop rapidly, change being the only constant (Batty & Marshall, 2017; Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). The global warming is creating unknown factors for communities around the planet and outbreaks of zoonotic diseases, like COVID-19 accelerate along with climate change, land-use change, biodiversity loss and introduction of species (Zhang, et al., 2022).

## 5.4 Barriers in social infrastructure and hinderance of communal resilience

In resilient communities, people have access to assets and services that offer support and care, and they are not limited by real or perceived barriers. Participating in decision-making processes, life-long learning and in the formation of welfare institutions and services adds to the community's strength. (NPRSB, 2015). One form of inaccessibility during COVID-19 was created by linguistic limitations as timely crisis communication and public health information was provided in dominant languages, excluding linguistic minorities, and leaving the translation work to community activists (Piller, et al., 2020). Emergency communication is responsible for establishing trust, providing comfort and for protecting people from misleading information. Language barriers and mistrust in the official communications make the disadvantaged and minoritized groups especially vulnerable

# Pandemic Bearing on Shared Spaces

to misinformation, which could further isolate them from the overall community and put their health at risk (Piller, et al., 2020; Burke, 2020; van Liempt & Kox, 2020). As Finland proceeded to mass vaccinations against the virus in 2021, an exemplary situation was developing when rumors of the vaccination causing declined fertility was spreading among the Middle Eastern immigrant population (Leppänen, 2021). This caused them more likely to refuse the vaccine, continuing to spread the virus in their tight-knit community and suffering more severe symptoms of the disease as well as become the target of further resentment and racism. With herd immunity and limited hospital capacities in mind; understanding and overcoming cultural differences and language barriers became pressing for the larger society. Social infrastructure and social capital are pivotal in the transmission of information in immigrant communities according to a Turku Multiculturalism council chairman Muhis Azizi, when asked about the importance of Imams and Friday Prayer in reaching Muslim families. The expertise of volunteer organizations and community leaders were thus tapped, to translate information bulletins into minority languages and to clear away distrust and misinformation. The Finnish national media and news agency YLE and the national health and welfare institution THL woke up to produce coronavirus news in different languages and in simplified Finnish (Leppänen, 2021; Rinta-Tassi, 2021; THL, 2020e).

Immigrants aren't the only ones suffering from communication barriers. In the Housing in Change survey in late 2020, a few residents expressed having felt stress when they didn't receive information on how the virus mitigation was managed in their building and how residents should act if they met people in the stairwell, were quarantined, or needed neighborly help but didn't know anyone personally. There were no standardized communication channels between the residents and the lack of community presented itself in the form of mistrust in their neighbors' conduct and in unpleasant exchanges of words. In some cases, however, residents had met each other in the courtyard to discuss the new exceptional situation, offered each other assistance in doing groceries for example and exchanged information and emotional support. (Lehtinen, et al., 2022).

Top-down and bottom-up language management efforts and strategies helped to overcome some language barriers during the crisis (Piller, Zhang & Li, 2020). By acknowledging, discussing, and acting on all kinds of barriers limiting the use of social infrastructure we may create more

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inclusive social networks, level inequalities and raise the overall resilience of people. Rather than relying on economic growth and cheap fossil fuels to push welfare, we need to realize how people and social connectedness are at the heart of building and maintaining sustainable social resilience (Exploring Community Resilience, 2011). In communities in which members regularly play a part in each other's lives, people are more likely to bond, feel a sense of belonging, help, and take care of each other (NPRSB, 2015). Social capital makes sure that everyone's skills, talents and perspectives are available in the effort of building resilience and wider networks keep the community connected to other outside sources of support and help (Exploring Community Resilience, 2011). A housing company could at first seem a health threat, during pandemics, because of the higher resident density compared to detached or semidetached housing. Then again, there are advantages to living close to a larger number of people. In terms of social resilience, the diversity of age, income, family- and career stages within the community is a key aspect of social hardiness as residents complement each other in skills, capability, and availability (Fionn Stevenson, et al., 2016; Arroyo, et al., 2021). These social resources are abundant in apartment block housing and can be easier accessed through active sharing of everyday spaces and practices.

## 5.5 The evasion of density and its side effects

From our experience with epidemics in the past we have learned to link population density to public health. Illness spreads faster where human density is higher. In early 1900's, tuberculosis mortality was noted proportional to the housing density and the infection rate greater where dwellings were more cramped. Therefore, in the absence of medical treatment of tuberculosis until 1943, the hygienist theories greatly inspired modernist architecture still influential today. Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye (1928), Jan Duiker's Zonnestraal sanatorium (1925), the Weissenhofsiedlung exhibition in Stuttgart (1927) and Alvar Aalto's Paimio sanatorium (1929) (Fezi, 2020), are examples which celebrated light, open space, clean surfaces, simplified facades, ventilation, and roof terraces for fresh air and oriented themselves towards the sun. In health-engaged architecture, the same values persist today (Lehtinen, et al., 2022). Modernist city planning, however, promoted car-based transportation and functional segregation where housing, industry, offices, and shopping were kept apart, leading to



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suburban sprawl of single-family housing and disappearance of traditional mix-use streets as places for encounter (Gehl, 1987). “They [modernist planners] didn’t realize that by speeding everybody out so they could have fresh air, they ruined the social life of the cities” (Gehl, 2020). The modernist evasion of density and cities designed for private motoring thus led to varied set of environmental problems and unexpected health effects. The housing suburbs led not only to decrease in the number of social interactions, but also to agricultural land loss, water pollution, infrastructural expenses and increase in resource and energy use. The use of private car along pollution caused a rise in obesity and hypertension (Fezi, 2020). Lowering density to slow down pandemics, might kill one bird with one stone but cause a rock-fall elsewhere.

We should thus widen the discussion and aims from advancing only people’s health to progressing environmental health, especially in built environment and by the construction sector. If we are to prevent or at least prepare more effectively to pandemics of the future, it is necessary to understand why zoonotic diseases emerge and more importantly why they occur in increasing frequency. Outbreaks of zoonotic diseases accelerate along with climate change, land-use change, biodiversity loss and introduction of species. (Zhang, et al., 2022). Viruses transfer from animals to humans where we continue to encroach the surrounding natural systems and cut down the animal territories for human use (Jowell & Barry, 2020). It reasons that we need to get more creative with the urban space we already possess and see that it is used to it’s maximum to prevent wasting existing infrastructure while expanding elsewhere. At the same time, it is imperative we prepare ourselves to future challenges. On the positive side, same as with climate crisis, we already know the solutions available to us to make adjustments and improve the situation in the built environment. It is urgent to step out of our well-trodden comfort zone and start investing in the social capital and people’s mental and physical wellbeing.

## 5.6 Planning density better benefit people and the planet

Communal sharing and mixed-use neighborhoods play a relevant role accommodating density and making climate restitutions (Toderian, 2020) (Pozoukidou & Chatziyiannaki, 2021). Shared spaces among housing help to create mix-use neighborhoods from which one doesn’t need to travel

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elsewhere for goods, sports, culture, or company. A well-equipped local scene and services not only reduce the CO2 emissions of daily commuting but also repress people from different neighborhoods crowding in shopping centers and supermarkets, lessening the number of potential contacts in flu seasons and pandemic waves. The 15-minute city, a concept of where residents can satisfy their daily needs and activities within a fifteen-minute walking or cycling radius, has gained great momentum globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The model is based on urban planning principles of accessibility, density, mixed land-use, design diversity and proximity with the intent of localizing city life and helping people to reconnect to their neighborhoods. (Pozoukidou & Chatziyiannaki, 2021). Downscaling and proximity enable easy access to places on foot or by bike promoting physical health and a safer, more enjoyable streetscape (Thurén, 2022; Rantala, et al., 2014; Gehl, 2010). Space between buildings should be used to accommodate more people instead of vehicles on vast parking spaces, which can be achieved through house-specific car- and bike-sharing for example. My own apartment building is located next to a public park, yet neither the park nor the shared garden area belonging to the house host inviting activities for the residents beyond a swing and a sand box. As surfaced in the YH Kodit housing survey, Finland has plenty of playgrounds in every neighborhood for children, yet teenagers, adults and elderly would enjoy outdoor activities, -games, and -equipment in public as well (Lehtinen, et al., 2022). This need was especially highlighted during the pandemic when restrictions limited the use of sport and hobby facilities. The city planner and urbanist Brent Toderian underlined, however, how the problem isn't density per se but crowding. According to his opinion we should thus have more, not fewer places where people can get physical exercise and mental relief. (Toderian, 2020).

Social infrastructure is a great example of spaces that can be used for more than their primary function and host a variety of activities and people in different times without the fear of congestion. From the environmental point of view, this would include using the spaces in exceptional times, off season and beyond official opening hours to avoid them standing empty. The collaborative consumption of space, services and goods should therefore become the norm where all excess capacity is distributed, shared, and reused within the community. Shared facilities among housing reach people where they dwell and keep the neighborhoods lively (Gehl, 2010) (Pozoukidou & Chatziyiannaki, 2021). The spaces' management, cleanliness, bookings

# Pandemic Bearing on Shared Spaces

and user access can be governed with technology like smart keys, apps, scanners, automated doorways, lighting and ventilation already familiar to the mainstream. This would allow the spaces to be used in all times of the day for various causes without personnel intervention. The digital footprint would enable tracing down the responsible party, should any misconduct or reckless use of the facilities occur. Again, engaging local communities in the planning process and plan implementation ensures a firm base of support, pride of place and social stability.



Image 21

Tammela locals enjoying the pastime of observing passer-bys

## 5.7 Concluding Words

Architecture has an objective to create better living environments, including the aspects of health, aesthetics, and social systems. It reflects the beliefs, attitudes, events, and phenomenon of its time and has thus also been influenced by the medical advancements and life-threatening episodes of epidemics. The development has also led to increasing privatization and value laid on private property, resulting in unsustainable lifestyles ecologically as well as socially. The car-oriented urban planning has affected people's physical wellbeing, reduced the potential of public space, and enabled spatial segregation as well as a deserted neighborhood scene.

During the pandemic, restrictions limited the use of public indoor activities encouraging people to venture outdoors to use urban space for get-togethers, recreation, play and exercise (Lehtinen, et al., 2022; Gehl, 2022).

# 5.7

In city centers, the lack of open space that allowed physical distancing led to creative place-sharing practices of adapting road, pedestrian space and green zones to host activities for leisure, entertainment, commerce, dining, walking and micro mobility. The downtown built environment was questioned, altered, rediscovered, and used to its maximum. (Pozoukidou & Chatziyiannaki, 2021). The use of public transport was reduced, and private motoring increased but so did light traffic of walking and cycling. By providing safe, diverse and attractive local scenes with a mix of amenities the spatial planners can support this behavioral shift for people's physical and mental advantage.

We have in past decades lived in conditions where home has equaled mainly mental protection from the outside world, accompanying the subsidiary primal need of safety from wildlife, weather, and violence. During the pandemic, the novel dangers became more concrete, and the physical protection and comfort of home received additional relevance. The emerging demands for a functional, secure and change resilient apartment underlined the current planning ideals of flexibility and adaptability in housing. (Lehtinen, et al., 2022; Nykänen & HS, 2021). Home environment unfortunately doesn't equal safety to everyone, nor does it necessarily include all the social connections keeping us afloat in times of personal and global crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized socioeconomical inequalities and restricted our social capital, highlighting the urgency of individual and communal resilience. Shared facilities on the neighborhood level are key locations to building up social capital, familiarity, and connectedness among the local residents. Their nature of being somewhere in the middle of public and private, creates a unique setting suitable for casual congregations as well as intimate meetings.

# Pandemic Bearing on Shared Spaces

# 6

## 6.1

## 6.2

In this chapter I will present the findings of the thesis in the form of recommendations to spatial planners and housing companies wishing to improve the utilization rate of shared facilities as well as improve residential wellbeing. The recommendations are complimenting the planning suggestions which concluded the Housing in Change -research project report, as referenced below in Image 22. Those planning suggestions based on the resident survey analysis, focus on improving spatial properties on the apartment and neighborhood level and emphasize the interplay between private and public living surroundings (Lehtinen, ym., 2022).

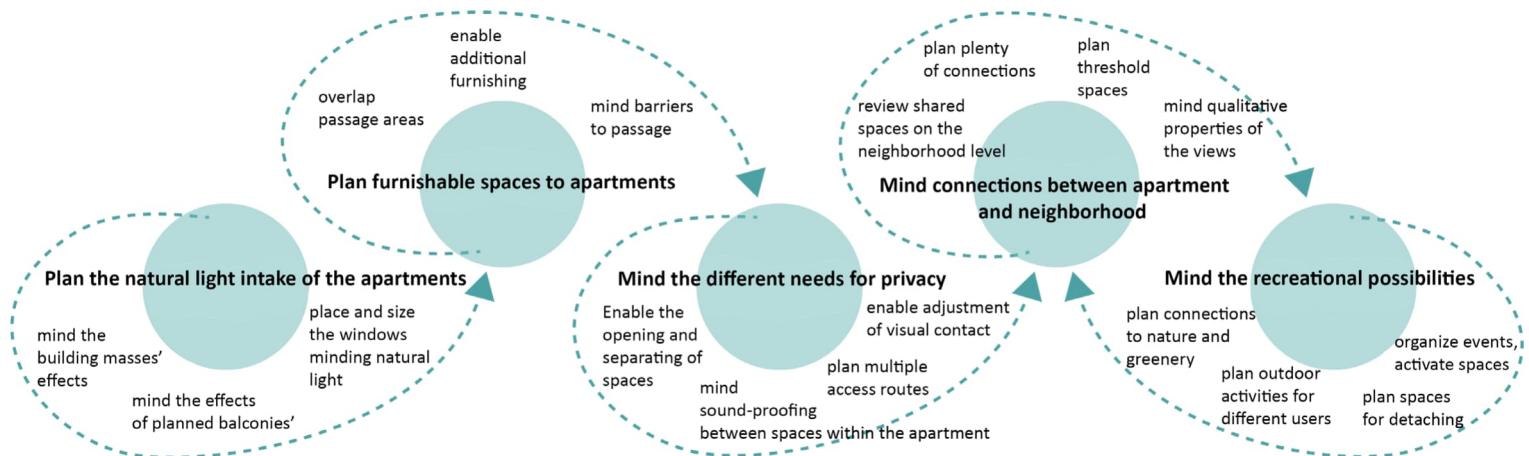


Image 22

Planning suggestions from Housing in change research project. Translated from Finnish.

The recommendations given in this thesis address the planning phase, spatial negotiations, and the operating life of shared social spaces, whether newly built, renovated or reintroduced to the community. They focus on providing the reader means to activate the social infrastructure in the buildings through resident involvement and communality initiating processes.

# Recommendations

## 6.1 Favor participatory design practices

### Utilize social capital and activate residents

The theoretical research and case reviews explored in the thesis suggest that participatory design practices that involve residents in the creation or renovation of shared spaces to the neighborhood is beneficial in multiple ways. Firstly, it gathers information of the project's social context by mapping different user profiles, wishes, concerns and innovations useful for the planners. The project is thus democratically introduced to the dwellers, ensuring it will serve their needs and take account of their opinion rather than be implemented in a top-down manner. It activates the residential interest and might even benefit from their skill sets and know-how. Secondly, it invites the residents to join in and gives them power to influence their living surroundings, which increases the sense of belonging and ensures the space will be well-received. Socially, participation in a joint effort tends to bring people closer together, helps the group to develop reciprocal understanding and trust and find ways to communicate about spaces use and rules later on.

Suggested methods to utilize residential social capital:

- 1) Resident survey to map spatial use and dwellers' interest
- 2) Informative social event or a workshop including residents and the planners. Ideas to include:
  - a. an inspirational talk on share economy, communal practices, communication methods etc.
  - b. visual input, example cases and questions to incite discussion and thinking
  - c. time for plenty of discussion
- 3) Gathering a group of interested dwellers to be involved in the project and represent the residential opinion
- 4) Ensure some demographics are not overrepresented while others are being left out

## 6.2 Encourage and promote prosocial behavior

### Mind your language

Written guidelines and house rules work as social foundations. They guide dwellers behavior, are referred to when negotiating shared spaces and

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help residents to avoid and resolve possible conflicts. Ideally, these rules are made together with the residents when creating or renovating a new space but often the rules are set by the housing association or property owner beforehand. Through research into several co-housing communities, it was discovered that people prefer to live by the unspoken social code of their immediate surroundings (Saari, 2016; Helamaa & Pylvänen, 2012). Avoid creating lists of restricted and prohibited behavior and using an authoritative tone in written documents covering spatial rules. Instead, favor methods also employed by positive psychology and -upbringing (Trogen, 2022), which encourage accommodating and neighborly practices and support prosocial behavior instead of emphasizing unwished conduct. In “The resident’s manual”, as named by one of the reviewed housing communities, attention was paid to use language that was welcoming resident activity, informed of spatial possibilities and recommended equitable and proactive means to handle conflict.

### Address barriers, enhance inclusivity

Easily accessible information is important when discussing participation and inclusivity in a housing community. Some residents might not follow digital platforms, be able to communicate through them and for some the official language might form a barrier. Everyone needs to be included in the flow of information, which involves using mixed media in its digital and printed forms. Especial attention should be paid to give out emergency communication to keep up residential cohesion, trust, avoid panic and hinder conflicts. Employ simplified language (selkokieli) when possible to reach people who have difficulties in understanding and reading the standard official language. This will help mentally disabled persons, people suffering from memory disorders, the aging, and immigrants, who are learning Finnish to be included. (Rieppo & Unkuri, 2021; Selkokeskus, 2021).

### 6.3 Introduce the shared spaces and initiate togetherness

#### People make the space

The resident survey and interview results as well as the authors empirical observations suggest that shared social spaces like the occasional hobby or club room, have in many apartment houses fallen to low use already



# Recommendations

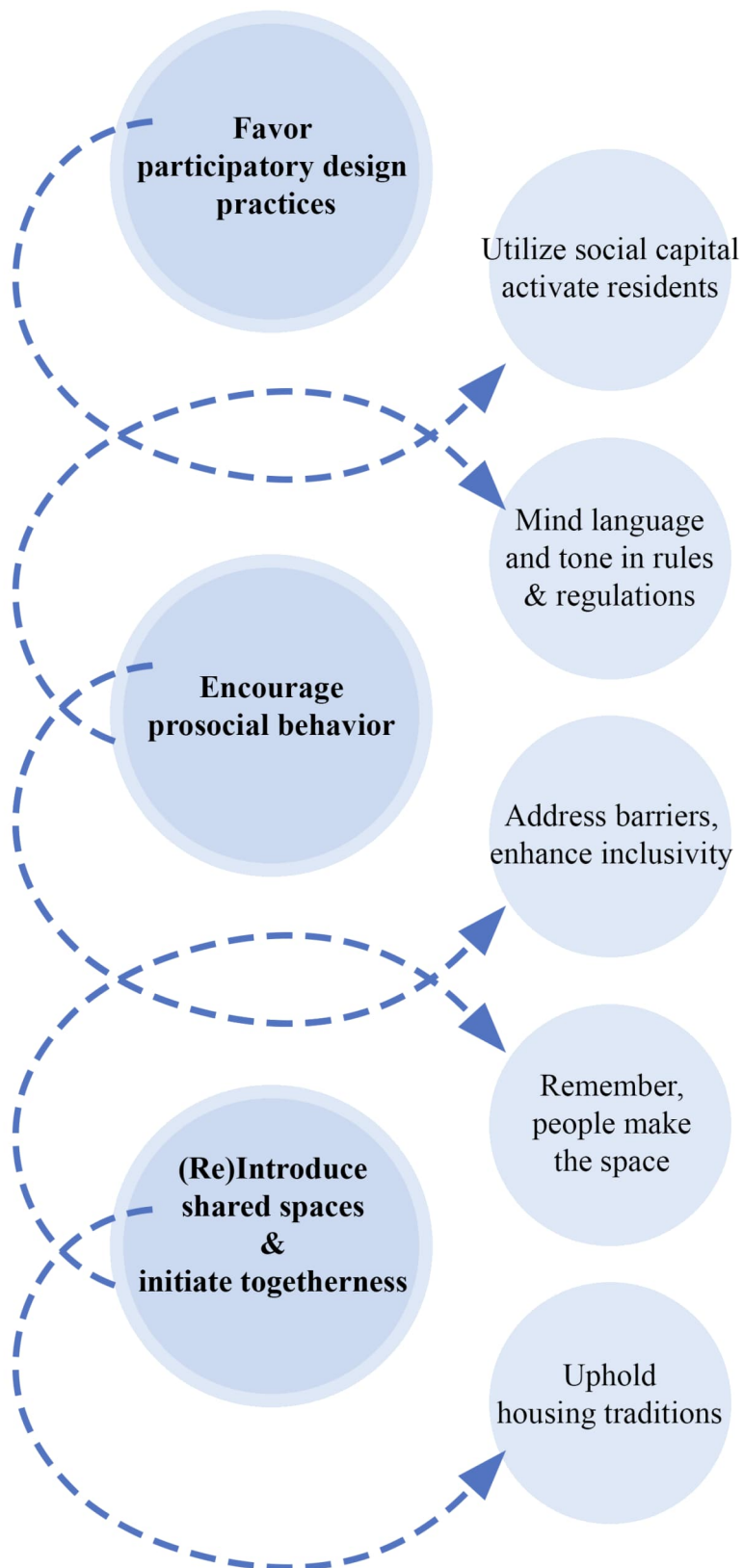


Image 23

Thesis recommendations

# 6.3

well before the pandemic restrictions. Some residents weren't aware of the existence of such spaces in their building, and some felt the spaces just weren't meant for them. (Lehtinen, ym., 2022). It is important for planners and housing companies to understand that providing a space and calling it "club room" isn't enough to guarantee it is well-received. Make sure the spaces facilitate diversity and are integrated to serve the residents' everyday life by organizing events and providing activities to various user groups. Demonstrate what the spaces are suited for and that their furnishing can be reorganized and adapted to accommodate for example a movie night, a Christmas bazaar, joint brunch, or a toddlers' play date. Collaborate with the local third sector associations and volunteer groups to see whether they could benefit from using the spaces whilst providing activities or support for the residents. Don't forget outdoor spaces need functions too to be inviting to all age groups. Encourage the residential initiative! This makes the shared spaces appealing, brings people together, and inspires the community of the possibilities they might not have even thought of.

## Uphold housing traditions

In the Housing in change survey some residents told of having experienced loneliness before and during the pandemic and longed for "natural ways" to connect with the neighbors. This wish could be translated into uncertainty of how and when to approach people and to have recurring chances to give it a try and maintain the contact. Finnish housing communities have a long tradition in collective practices, which are in danger of fading into oblivion. Preserving these traditions has the potential to bring the different age groups and lifestyles living within the building together.

Endorse the weekly joint sauna shifts: they provide a relaxed and companionable setting to detach from stress, to discuss current on-goings and settle differences (Helamaa, Communal practices in Annikki cohousing community, 2022).

Organize seasonal work bees (talkoot): they activate residents to take ownership of the outdoor areas and bring the larger community together in a joint effort to improve shared spaces (Museovirasto, 2021). Provide enough garden tools and snow scoops for the building so people can take up chores spontaneously.

# Recommendations

Invigorate resident democracy and remind dwellers of the possibilities of the resident committee if it has become a forgotten practice. Their activity might not always be transparent to newcomers and not everyone feels entitled to invite themselves into a decision-making-position without encouragement. Communal spirit, cooperation, and the committee's chance to influence the affairs of the house create a shared sense of responsibility, security, and permanence (ARA, 2008; Rieppo & Unkuri, 2021).

# 7

This final chapter will conclude the thesis findings and the discussion on the importance of social infrastructure and social capital to architectural planning.

The first part on social infrastructure discussed the role and value of places that facilitate encounter and upkeep of human relationships. The social capital formed and nursed in those spaces supports people's daily wellbeing but also their resilience in challenging times. Different kinds of social infrastructure, enable different levels of social activity. Spatial and locational variety is, in addition, necessary to enable user diversity and inclusivity. The thesis emphasizes how social capital and communality should be encouraged as valuable factors of a functioning society, which doesn't lack civil activism, invites participation, and addresses social barriers. To put these values into spatial properties, the thesis draws inspiration from the characteristics of social third places, as drafted by urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg. The spatial supply of the built environment impacts people's social behavior and can hence hinder or attract spontaneous encounter and planned get-togethers. For this reason, architects should be informed of the sociology of spaces.

In the second part, the thesis centered its attention to the social infrastructure placed at the threshold of private apartments and the public places in the neighborhood. Shared spaces in housing are unique in their potential to offer non-commodified semiprivate settings, which can be utilized for communal events and for continuation of homes. This thesis challenged conventional ideas about the residents' ability and willingness to share and negotiate space. It explained how cultural norms and path dependency in the Finnish housing industry are partly responsible for the idealized values

# Conclusion

of individualism and ownership. These values detain the transition towards share economy and climate friendly ways of living. The thesis encourages architects to question the established housing habits and to introduce spatial solutions that advance human and planetarian wellbeing.

To discover concrete means to develop functional and attractive shared spaces, the thesis reviewed three Nordic housing communities experienced in sharing practices. The established social practices and collective trust has enabled these communities to tap into their communal resilience and support each other through the exceptional times of COVID-19. The case analysis showed that resident participation supports feelings of wellbeing and empowerment by introducing low threshold socializing between neighbors. The residents' chance to influence their surroundings increased the sense of belonging and attachment to place consequentially rising the shared spaces utilization rate. When the housing companies organized occasional social events and activities in the spaces, they were able to address social barriers and enhance inclusivity. The thesis recommends sustaining Finnish housing traditions like joint sauna shifts, work bee events and resident committees as a familiar and easy method to activate residents and bring different age groups and lifestyles together.

In the third chapter, the thesis explored how the global pandemic affected people's lives and the use of shared spaces. The mitigation efforts led many to venture outdoors to discover new ways to use the urban space and surrounding nature for recreation, exercise, and socializing. The popularity of temporary space sharing solutions that hosted entertainment, dining, and micro mobility on roads, parking lots and parks usually seen without pedestrian activities, urge urban planners to recognize the need for a more walkable and social city scape. By providing attractive local scenes with a mix of amenities the spatial planners can accommodate density and avoid crowding in urban hotspots during pandemic times. This can also encourage climate friendly ways to move about and ideally help people to form social capital in their area.

The thesis focused on promoting alternative forms of ownership and sharing practices enabled by shared social spaces in housing. This was done from the aspect of health-engaged architecture and with the intent to improve residential wellbeing and communal resilience through the means and benefits of share economy and user participation. The time optimized and rutted workflow of spatial planners might hinder us from acknowled-

ging social contexts and from engaging in participatory design practices. When planning spaces for togetherness those practices play, however, an important role in the space's successful deployment and future use. People make the space, literally and figuratively. Their confidence in using and shaping the shared space according to their needs should be the architectural goal of the project. The opportunity to initiate the first steps towards communal existence should not be missed, as it enables the dwellers to establish social capital, find ways to communicate with each other and negotiate the rules of their shared ownership. Participatory design does not only benefit the end-user but introduces a chance for reciprocal learning and individual development for the planners as well.

# Conclusion

# IV

*During the writing process and while reading into the prerequisites and importance of social interaction, I have become more observant of the social processes all around me and how the different spatialities either enhance or disrupt encounters and social coherence. Adjusting to a new private role and the exceptional times, have provided me with a fresh insight into the benefits of social infrastructure and the need for individual and communal resilience through social capital. Time has thus been the most influential of my methodologies and the thesis would likely convey a different, more pragmatic and short-sighted conviction of spatial planning, had it been handed in when initially planned.*

*Pregnancy during restrictions and physical isolation has impacted my mental map of the local urban environment and its accessibility. After becoming trapped in a body that needed rest and seating in public places (taped or stored away during the pandemic), easy and quick access to clean and roomy public bathrooms (not provided in some parts of the city), health services along public transport (due to monthly to weekly check-ups) and fresh air and greenery in urban areas (because of nausea, vertigo and breathing related panic attacks from wearing a mask, being in crowded places or surviving the hot summer days) my understanding about spatial barriers has deepened. Back then I craved for safe spaces and was often depended on strangers' kindness. I can only begin to imagine life for someone in a wheelchair after managing the city with a baby carriage constantly blocking grocery store aisles, café passage, narrow doorways, tight corners and not being able to access all services due to stairs, thresholds, vestibules, or construction sites. I will likely face these challenges again, in old age at the latest. I wish to*



# Afterword

*address these barriers in my own planning in the future. The social barriers are a chapter of their own, but I feel they also can be addressed and lowered through widened reciprocal practices, understanding and compassion.*

*Inspired by the openness of YH Kodit residents and convinced by the hard data from sociologists showing the mental and physical health benefits of casual social interaction I have been encouraged to step up my own social game. By becoming more involved, by listening in, attending house resident events, a social support group, and getting repeatedly into dialogue with my neighbors, cashiers, people on playgrounds, cafés, public transport etc. I have begun to feel myself more part of my surroundings. I mostly feel joy and satisfaction when exchanging a few words, by receiving new input and contributing for the benefit of others. At times I remain an observer but have also become a more active participant.*

*I know the relationships and social habits will come in handy in times of change or loss. I wish to pass this knowledge to my son, so he will not feel alone or incompetent with other people. That he will not treat the side characters of his life badly and is confident to access social infrastructure and services to aid his existence. The road to my thesis will help me as a designer to plan spaces that invite inclusive social interaction and comfortable togetherness but also offer a place of solitude and not of loneliness. I intend to plan spaces that are accessible, inviting, and innovative to their users and support them in turbulent times. I wish to engage in participatory design, so I can keep on learning myself.*

# V

*This thesis has been funded as a part of the Housing in Change research project conducted by ASUTUT research group at Tampere University in collaboration with YH Kodit Ltd. and Länsi-Suomen Yleishyödyllinen Asuntosäätiö. I'd like to thank all of the residents and personnel of YH Kodit housing who participated in the online survey and workshops and thus allowed me the insight to their lives.*

*The post of a research assistant has been a special position for me, as I've been able to be closely involved in nearly every step of the project by performing hands-on data collection, its' sorting and analysis but mostly in witnessing the great minds and hilarious company of my more experienced ASUTUT colleagues at work. It has been inspirational and fun, thank you for taking me on board!*

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*Especial thanks to my first supervisor, Katja Maununaho. My thesis could*

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*be summed up with “What she said.” And she has said it so much better. Despite your extensive knowledge and studies of shared spaces and communal practices, you have always given me space to find out things for myself, nudging me in the right directions and listened to my thoughts and observations with interest and enthusiasm. You have challenged my views, identified the core in my shaky notions, and encouraged me to go on when I’d given in to self-doubt. Thank you.*

*I would also like to express my gratitude to my mothers’ club: Anni, Alma, Irja, Satu, Heini and Juulia. You strong and brilliant women are the very embodiment of resilience in toughest of times, midst private battles and in daily chores. I am forever grateful for your inspiration and friendship.*

*To my son, Mats: you have perhaps held me back from the writing process, but you have been my biggest motivation and fellow explorer in getting acquainted with various social infrastructure and in finding our own local third places. Your open joy and blind trust in other people are inspirational. Without you, I would not have seen the holes in my social networks nor gotten to know the many wonderful women, who have provided my life with support, activities, and laughter beyond the role of a mother.*

*To my partner, Mario: thank you for the incredible patience, compassion, kindness, and strength. Thank you for practical advice, concrete help, eye-opening discussions, moral backing and for holding the fort. We make a great team. I love you.*

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Image 2. Facebook-group 'TampereMissio -Kimpassa perhetoiminta'. 25.5.2021. [Accessed august 2022] <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=3609704005802870&set=a.404430901872381>

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