

Senior Cohousing in Denmark and Sweden Characteristics of Residents, Motives for Moving To and Evaluative Outcomes

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There is an increasing interest and curiosity within ageing populations in Sweden about the senior cohousing concept. How can housing units be designed and what may they provide and mean for individuals and groups of elderly persons? Municipalities and state authorities have hopes that senior cohousing can contribute to the welfare of elderly people as the scope for assistance and services by the public sector is shrinking. There is an interest among actors in the building sector to invest and meet the demands.

In Denmark and Sweden the first senior cohousing units came around 1985. But the background and development in the countries is different. In Denmark there has been a vivid discussion and a meter bookshelf of books have been published. In Sweden there are very few evaluations and the discussion is increasing lately. From a Swedish point of view there is a great interest to compare and get a deeper and wider knowledge base.

A study of units (seniorbofællesskaber) in Denmark and (seniorhus) Sweden is going on in a cooperation between

the School of Human Ecology at the Catholic University in Seoul and the School of Architecture at Chalmers in Göteborg. The study is based on visits in housing units and a questionnaire to the inhabitants. 655 seniors responded to the questionnaire; 187 seniors in 14 seniorbofællesskaber (rented or in housing cooperatives) in Denmark, 282 seniors in 11 seniorhus within the SABO sector (municipality owned housing companies with rental apartments) and 186 seniors in 8 housing co-operatives initiated by the Seniorgården Housing Company in Sweden. The visits took place in springtime and the questionnaires were handled during spring and summer 2002. Data processing and discussions of outcomes are going on. There are many similarities but also considerable differences between units and between the countries due to the background, development, attitudes and cultures as well as planning and design. Mainly the inhabitants express quite positive experiences of their environment and life.