

Designing the Commons: Places that Support Community Ownership

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**Abstract**

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Nancy Rottle and Jeffrey Hou

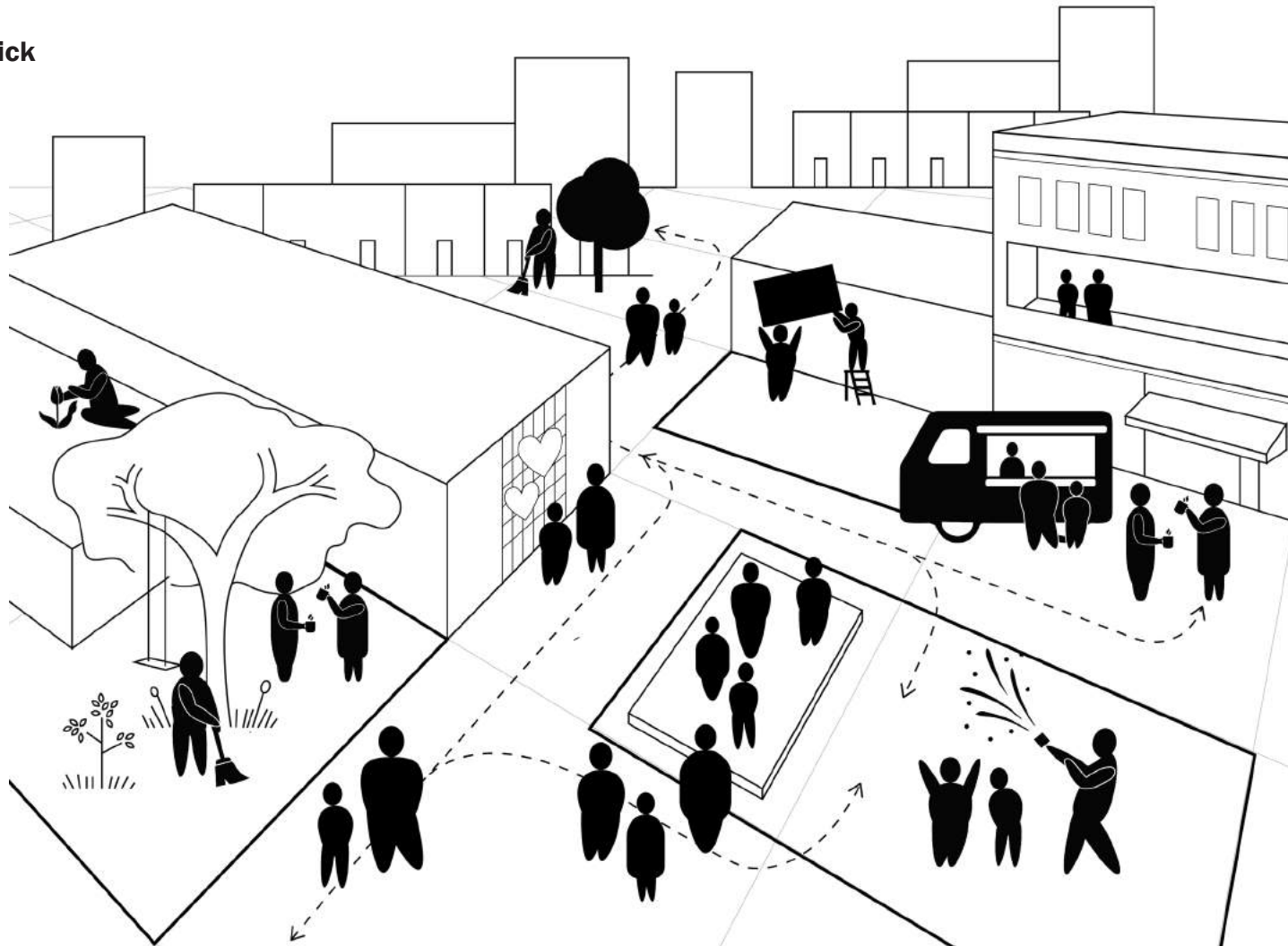
Department of Landscape Architecture

This thesis explores how landscape architects can support community-owned placemaking in cities. Community ownership refers to models of non-commodified collective legal and psychological ownership, especially as applied to housing and home. Community ownership has the potential to increase community control and decrease economic displacement by extending ownership rights and providing affordable housing. Community ownership models have been theorized as *commons* and apply to multiple scales of housing, neighborhoods, and cities. Using commons theory, case study research, and other literature, this thesis proposes a framework in which housing and urban design can afford better settings for collective ownership to take place. The framework begins with two main goals for inclusive community ownership: lowered thresholds to belonging and agency to place-make. Next, commoning practices that work toward these goals in the context of urban mixed-use, community-owned housing are identified. Finally, a design toolkit for creating the types and characteristics of spaces that generally afford these seven commoning practices is proposed. The toolkit contains three overarching recommendations: to make places physically and emotionally connected; supportive of community life; and changeable over time. In conclusion, this thesis suggests an approach for landscape architects to partner with community-owned developments and apply this framework on a case-by-case basis throughout the lifecycle of a project.

# Designing the Commons

## Places that Support Community Ownership

Roxanne Glick



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## Preface

My own story frames this work. I grew up in Blue Ridge, a rich neighborhood and common interest development in North Seattle, where homeowners can belong to the social club with access to common amenities like a pool, tennis courts, beach access and social events. There was great community life in Blue Ridge but its exclusive by wealth, and racial covenants until the 1970s, limited our interactions. Growing up there framed my perception of the world from an upper-middle class white point of view. Living in a college co-op I learned the value of intentional community and common ownership. Now I live in the Central District of Seattle where most of the last generation has been displaced and just up the street Africatown is using a community land trust to hold onto the neighborhood. In fall 2018 I studied established and extensive community-owned housing models in Denmark which are now being dismantled by racist and neoliberal policies. My experiences have led me to ask questions about what makes an inclusive community and as a landscape architecture student, how to design those spaces.

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

This thesis explores how landscape architects can support community-owned placemaking in cities. The notion of community control is widely supported in theory but largely unimplemented in practice, as demonstrated by urban economic displacement. Community ownership is a community control, affordable housing, and anti-displacement strategy that matches legal ownership and governance to the psychological ownership people feel over their communities. Placemaking, enacting the right to shape the city to a community's collective needs and desires, is an important aspect of community ownership. With a foundation of commons theory and a strategy of 'commoning practices' that address both belonging and agency, this thesis presents a design toolkit for community-owned placemaking.

## Community ownership

Sherry Arnstein's 1969 article "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" is still widely used to teach community involvement in planning processes. The uppermost rung on Arnstein's ladder is "citizen control" in which "participants handle the entire job of planning, policy making and managing a program." (371) Kevin Lynch, in his 1981 classic *Good City Form*, argues for local control by users of a place as a performance metric of a good city. (220) Decades have passed as these texts have become classics in the fields of design and planning, but citizen control has rarely been implemented outside the legal protection of property ownership. Meanwhile, cities such as Seattle are experiencing affordable housing crises that are displacing marginalized communities who have less access to homeownership.

Community-owned housing is a self-organized strategy that helps communities stay in place by collectively owning affordable homes. Community ownership refers to a suite of economic and governance models that put control in the hands of citizens by sharing and democratizing ownership. Models of community ownership retain affordability of housing for community members by removing profit from the sale of housing; instead community members are stewards of collectively-owned property. Community ownership inherently provides stable homes, supports long-term investment in place and increased social capital and works to equalize the

distribution of wealth in society.

Community ownership, in alignment with the right to the city and placemaking movements, creates pathways for citizens to shape their own environments in radiating spheres of influence from private, to shared, to public. Community-owned placemaking inherently leads to design that is culturally relevant to the community who made it. Affordability mechanisms help people stay in place to reap those benefits. In short, community-owned placemaking supports both psychological and legal ownership of place. The alignment of property ownership and psychological ownership that affects design is clear when we compare single-family owner-occupied homes with rental apartment buildings: owner-occupied homes receive more care and investment in both the property and the community. The legal ownership of land affects the way the space is designed and cared for. Community ownership challenges assumptions about how to achieve agency and belonging in cities: it can build a sense of security and agency similar to individual ownership while fostering a stronger sense of belonging that is the norm in modern cities.

As a landscape architecture student who wants to support community ownership, in this thesis I explore how to best design for these unique circumstances. This thesis answers the research question, what types of spaces support inclusive, community-owned placemaking?

# Driving forces

## Displacement

In Seattle, Washington, a rapidly growing city with rising property values, residents, disproportionately people of color, are being displaced and many more are at risk of economic displacement. (Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development (2016), 9) Displacement reduces access of already disadvantaged people to jobs, services, community, and home.

One of the negative effects of displacement is reduced resilience to climate change. The 2016 Got Green and Puget Sound Sage report “Our People, Our Planet, Our Power” concludes that the biggest need for climate resilience in South Seattle is affordable housing because without it “all efforts to build climate resilience would be undermined.” (3) Resilience most often requires place-based strategies. Displacement reduces climate resilience when people no longer have access to their community networks that support each other in hard times. Local governments in more affordable places to live tend not to be as well equipped for resilience including disaster preparedness and response.

While Seattle has long prided itself on public amenities such as treed streets and neighborhood parks, current efforts to expand such amenities have the potential to further increase land values thereby intensify displacement. “Gentrificationphobia,” coined by Matthew Yglesias in 2012, puts the profession of landscape architecture in a bind since people already

experiencing environmental injustice are understandably reluctant to embrace improvements that might ultimately result in their displacement.

In order to help prevent displacement, the Got Green and Puget Sound Sage 2016 report makes a main policy recommendation for “community control of development.” (35) This recommendation includes a commitment to “community-ownership” including community-owned housing and locally-owned cultural and business anchors to address both home and community scales. (35) Community ownership has the potential to create affordable housing to curb displacement thereby distributing resiliency resources more equitably.

## Ownership

Ownership is an important concept that helps societies function by making clear rules about how to behave and well summarized by Maykel Verkuyten and Borja Martinovic in “Collective Psychological Ownership and Intergroup Relations” (2017). The authors define ownership as a social construct “that refers to social relationships between individuals with respect to objects.” (1023) Ownership functions to define both one’s control over one’s property (legal ownership), and construction of one’s identity (psychological ownership). These two aspects of ownership relate to the two primary goals for design that support community ownership proposed in this thesis: agency to place-make and lowered thresholds to belonging. These are closely related to each other as one’s possessions are included in one’s conception of self and collective ownership cements

group identity. Psychological ownership is greater than just a sense of possession or affiliation, “ownership implies a sense of proprietary attachment that is established and maintained in relation to others.” (1024) Both legal and psychological ownership carry with them the bundle entitlements of ownership, usage, transfer and exclusion. (1021-1024)

At the scale of the individual and the group, ownership is asserted through social relationships, such as marking territory, that are not necessarily backed up with legal property rights. Even psychological ownership carries with it the understanding of rights of ownership, especially the right to exclude others. This explains why psychological ownership over one’s neighborhood might be expressed by trying to keep others out. It is also why a cultural group’s cultural property might be appropriated. Legal rights of ownership might conflict with a psychological sense of ownership and form the basis of a fight for legal recognition of rights. This is the case with gentrification and displacement; when groups of people have created value in neighborhoods that they feel they own, but without legal rights to ownership of property, they are vulnerable to losing their psychological ownership. (Verkuyten and Martinovic, 1024-2025)

Community ownership seeks legal ways to control property to match feelings of psychological ownership and harness the value neighbors have created. While community ownership has mostly been undertaken because individual community members cannot afford to purchase property on their own, there are also benefits of collective ownership. The

experience of collective psychological ownership has been shown to help people define their identities, “feel a sense of home, have a purpose and direction in life, to feel strong and powerful, to have a sense of collective continuity across time” which demonstrate how important a meaningful sense of community is in people’s lives. (Verkuyten and Martinovic, 1024)

## Home

In their 2018 article “Political Economy Comes Home: On Moral Economies of Housing” Alexander, Bruun and Koch situate housing as a “contested domain where competing understandings of citizenship are constructed, fought over and acted out.” (121) The struggles over housing can only be understood by taking into account its political, economic, social, affective and moral dimensions, including class analysis. Thus, persistent structural inequalities are “metabolized through” (123) plural and overlapping moral economies consisting of dynamic combinations of norms, meanings and practices. People experience and act on macro-processes such as privatization, gentrification and debt as a “nexus of affective and politico-economic domains.” (127) It is in home that political and economic trends, social order and power are acted out and enforced. For example these dimensions can coincide in relation to security of finances, building construction quality, neighborhood violence, environmental hazards, security of tenure and social capital. (130)

Social critic bell hooks in *Yearning* (1990) points out

that “throughout history, African-Americans have recognized the subversive value of homeplace... Whatever the shape and direction of the black liberation struggle, the domestic space has been a crucial site for organizing, and forming political solidarity.” (47) She notes that the conception of home as a politically-neutral place of leisure is a “bourgeois white norm.” hooks explains that because public space in the US is oppressive to black people, homes of black people need to intentionally construct a safe and healing place. (78)

Home and home ownership occupy a unique place in our lives, as they fulfill needs on every level of Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy: a home provides protection from the elements, comfort, legal rights and status, expression of aesthetics and taste, and pride that comes along with it. In addition, home provides a sense of what is called in sociological discourse ‘ontological security’ or basic trust in existential parameters of self and social identity. (Elliott and Wadley, 133)

A sense of home goes beyond the physical aspects of dwelling to also be defined by emotional attachment and appropriation. (Elliott and Wadley, 137) The identity one forms around home can be understood through the concepts of elective belonging and aesthetics. (Elliott and Wadley, 138) Research since the 1960s suggests that home ownership can mitigate ontological insecurity as a “hub of a whole complex of relationships.” (Elliott and Wadley, 133) As a home is both an ontological construct and a financial asset, market instability can directly affect one’s life not only financially but also one’s social identity and sense of self. (Elliott and Wadley, 137).

The case of community-owned housing begs us to ask if shared ownership satisfies the ontological needs as individual home ownership, and if a more robust feeling of belonging that might come with cooperative living might enhance feelings of belonging and social identity. The aspects of group dynamics at play in collectively owned housing may be important to the feelings of home and security one experiences. (Verkuyten and Martinovic)

### **The right to the city**

This thesis embraces the challenge set out by philosopher-geographers Henri Levebre and David Harvey to claim citizens’ rights to the city. Opening his 2003 essay “The Right to the City,” Harvey clearly states “The right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart’s desire.” (1) The right to the city underpins the placemaking movement in as much as it emphasizes active participation of local communities in remaking their homes. (Silberberg et al (2013) , 2) The right to the city framework extends into the “right to freedom from displacement” and spatial exclusion in that displaced people are forced into migration, excluded from the right to have space in, none-the-less shape the city. (Lund Hansen and Clark, 23)

In regards to gentrification and displacement, Harvey argues that people have a right to the city for being part of the social creation of its desirability. (2013, 78) One way ownership is justified is through investment of ones’ labor in its creation. (Verkuyten and Martinovic (2017), 1027) As discussed above,

the sense of ownership, and labor invested that justifies this sense of ownership does not match the legal right to ownership many community members have. Harvey writes that the disconnect is the “relationship between those who produce or capture [neighborhood value] at a variety of scales and those who appropriate it for private gain.” (Harvey (2013), 79) As diversity itself is recognized as a desirable quality in cities, the idea of diversity is being commodified and sold for real estate profits. People profiting from the idea of diversity that they did not help foster takes advantage of other peoples’ hard work of negotiating difference and making transcultural connections. (Huron, 3) Furthermore, marginalized communities (who enable the idea of diversity) are disproportionately affected by displacement because of longstanding racialized economic inequity. (Huron, 3)

### **Summary of driving forces**

The right to the city encompasses the goal of creating home in the city, owned both legally and psychologically, that can resist displacement and work toward climate justice. The differences between psychological and legal ownership helps explain the mismatch between peoples’ feeling of home, the work they put into increasing a place’s value, and their legal right to it. These mismatches explain why economic displacement is so impactful on peoples’ lives. This impact is further illuminated by understanding the significance that home carries for humans. The right to the city movement recognizes this importance and legitimizes not only a right to *be* in the city but a right to *shape* it through placemaking. Community ownership is a mechanism

to implement the right to the city. Commons theory, discussed in the next chapter, illuminates the process of community-owned placemaking.

## **Relevance to landscape architecture**

Landscape architects design the built environment and have a hand in the design process, but the DNA of the built environment, the fundamentals of *who* designs *what*, *when*, *and for whom*, is determined by larger forces such as culture, laws, and economics. By and large, land is shaped by the people who have the legal right of ownership over it. At the same time landscape architecture is an ethically-based profession. The 2016 New Landscape Declaration, the Landscape Architecture Foundation’s widely accepted call to action, is concerned with social and ecological justice. Landscape architects may not affect who owns land and what happens on it, but they can help support the success of projects that work toward goals they also aspire to. It is my hope with this thesis to advance the knowledge of landscape architects who want to best serve community-owned housing development.

An approach for landscape architects to align their work with community-owned housing is to partner with community leaders as equals, as explained in more detail in Chapter 6. Community ownership allows for a dynamic process of local investment that design professionals can be involved with over a long period of time. Understanding community ownership and commons theory can better equip designers to develop urban community-owned housing that can add value and efficiencies

specifically targeted for community-building activities. Specifically, community ownership affects multiple aspects of landscape architectural practice such as how designers endeavor to induce a “sense of ownership” in users, development of culturally relevant programming, and design with future maintenance capacity in mind. In summary, landscape architects can develop specific expertise for design that supports community ownership.

## **Structure and scope of this thesis**

This introduction has laid the groundwork to understand why equitable approaches to urban housing design and planning are needed. Chapter two, the literature review, explains commons theory and how it applies to community-owned housing to address the challenges posed in chapter one. Chapter two goes on to survey housing and urban design literature, including placemaking, for insight on design that supports activities in urban mixed-use housing. Chapter three presents four case studies which are analyzed at different scales of commons with a focus on commoning practices at each scale.

This thesis responds to real-world systems and problems and explores these issues to the extent that they give background to community-owned placemaking. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to thoroughly explore or explain financial, administrative and political systems needed to make community ownership work. Most of the available literature on community ownership addresses these subjects so here I draw out aspects of these subjects relevant to the built environment.

Chapter four begins to develop a theory of community-

owned placemaking. It presents my synthesis of commons theory that points to two main goals of community-ownership, lowered thresholds to belonging and agency to place-make. I argue that these goals are reached through commoning practices which can be supported through physical design. To summarize, my process answered the following three questions: (1) What are the most important goals of community-owned housing? (2) What commoning practices lead to inclusive community-owned housing? And (3) what types of spaces support inclusive commoning practices? Chapter five presents my ‘design toolkit for community-owed placemaking’ that can support commoning practices in three categories: physically and emotionally connected, supporting community life, and changeable over time. In chapter six I conclude by defining an approach for landscape architects to align their work with community ownership and how to apply the framework.

My goal with this thesis is to support community-owned housing models as additional affordable housing options, currently underutilized in Seattle. Community-owned housing is already being designed and built in Seattle, including Othello Square, a case study in chapter three. This thesis is meant to be a contribution to the community ownership movement. It is significant challenge to organize and fund these projects; how can design work to improve their chances of success?



## Chapter 2

# Literature Review

Commons theory reveals how community ownership works. The process of creating commons begins with people who organize themselves to create resources that in turn benefit the community members who made them. This process has produced non-commodified housing, such as limited-equity cooperatives, enabling affordable homeownership and numerous community benefits.

Places that support community ownership begin with placemaking by current residents. Placemaking highlights ways that community members assert their right to the city by transforming their homes.

Places can be designed for by serving the activities or ‘commoning practices’ of community ownership, many of which have been discussed in urban design literature. Frameworks such as transcultural placemaking and targeted universalism can help address the complexities of placemaking in an American city.

## Commons theory

A commons is a distinct formulation outside of state or market logic with its own body of theory. Commons theory is useful in understanding how physical resources relate to people's lives in an intuitive way. (Hess, 36) Dellenbaugh, in her 2015 book *Urban Commons: Beyond State and Market*, finds that the commons is often defined as “a construct constituted of three main parts: (a) *common* resources, (b) institutions (i.e., *commoning* practices), and (c) the community (i.e., *commoners*) who are involved in the production and reproduction of the commons.” (13) The idea of the commons brings together physical and nonphysical aspects of our lives in ways that always connect to people. In Figure 2.1, I have expanded on this definition in diagrammatic form: communities of people organize commoning practices (also called institutions) that create resources that in turn benefit the people and communities who initiated the process.

Lund Hansen and Clark (2017) describe the concept of the commons as a framework that can facilitate the right to the city: “The right to the city involves collective creation of... our built environments... and involves the deepening of democracy and the de-commodification of urban space, making room for the common construction of place.” (24) Operating as a commons is a way people can exercise their right to the city by democratically participating in the city's ongoing making and remaking, asserts Amanda Huron in her 2012 PhD thesis. Huron defines the term: “a commons is a resource that is both

collectively owned and/or managed by its members or users; and is valued by its members for its everyday use, rather than for its potential monetary exchange on the market.” (2)

Theorists on the commons emphasize the three elements of community, resources, and institutions with different weights. In his chapter “Urban Commoning in Cities Divided,” Jeffrey Hou (2017) suggests a move from “a focus on shared resources to the production of social relationships” by designers of the commons. (300) Elinor Ostrom's principles of governing common-pool resources also heavily weight the aspect of institutions in that the first principle, “clearly defined boundaries,” addresses communities and resources while the remaining seven principles are concerned with institutions. (Dellenbaugh, 14) The New England town common is an example of a commons that emphasizes physical space in a way that is inseparable from its purpose of shared use.

Amanda Huron (2018) identifies the “alterglobalizationist” theoretical movement since the 1980s that employs a Marxist critique of capitalism to define the commons. (27) This theory asserts that capitalism relies on a working class that was created by separating people from their source of subsistence outside of waged labor – cutting commoners off from the commons is necessary to capital accumulation. (28) Studying enclosure of the commons and how to reclaim the commons is a focus in “alterglobalizationist” literature and activism. (28) Along these lines, Huron (2018) quotes Vandana Shiva that the commons “implies a resource that is vital to our collective well-being and sustenance.” (28)

## Housing commons and common-pool resources

It could be said that the very idea of the housing commons is an oxymoron since the home is a private place where one can retreat. Gutzon Larsen and Lund Hansen in their 2016 article “Commodifying the Danish Housing Commons” address this point by clarifying that a commons is collective and non-commodified. While housing is not collective in the sense of being public space, the availability of housing, cycling among residents over their lifetimes, is a collective need of all people. To Huron (2012), housing is often unaffordable because it is a commodity; its use value (having a home) relies on its exchange value (price on the market) and thus those without access to acquire housing at its market value do not have access to a decent home. (7) The commodification of housing poses a problem to the value of housing as a human right.

Legal ownership of one’s home guarantees it as a place to live. Community ownership models provide mechanisms to decouple the use value from the exchange value of property so that one can enjoy the benefits of homeownership without being subject to the open market. Community ownership enables people to identify with and invest in their home and neighborhood both legally psychologically.

A housing commons, as I use it to analyze the case studies in this thesis, is a common-pool resource, a bounded community that engages in commoning practices (including formation of institutions) to create and maintain the collective resource of housing. A common-pool resource is shared and subtractive, susceptible to overuse that limits others’ use of the

resource, as with a fishery. A housing commons can itself contain nested scales, as in Danish nonprofit housing associations. In all cases, a housing commons co-exists with other forms of commons – urban commons, cultural commons, and global commons, in their nested, overlapping, or adjacent ways.

The 2013 article, “Generalizing the Core Design Principles for the Efficacy of Groups” by David Wilson and Elinor Ostrom, argues for Ostrom’s governance principles to be generalized and applied to a variety of fields. The article gives two examples of applying her principles to neighborhood development projects. Additionally, Ostrom’s theory of commons governance has been applied in at least two studies of cooperative housing. Taco Brandsen and Jan-Kees Helderma analyze housing cooperatives in Germany in their 2012 article, “The Trade-Off Between Capital and Community: The Conditions for Successful Co-production in Housing.” They ask how individual and collective interests can be aligned as closely as possible and find that people need rules and structures to do this. (4) They turn to Ostrom for those rules because they find that housing is a common-pool resource; they compare their findings of conditions for “successful co-production of housing” with Ostrom’s principles and find significant overlap. (16) Jonas Anund Vogel, Hans Lind and Per Lundqvist in their 2016 article “Who is Governing the Commons,” evaluate Swedish housing cooperatives against Ostrom’s principles. (1) Using Ostrom’s principles they suggest changes in governance structures to improve the organizations. (1)

Debate about commons theory often refers to Garrett

Hardin's 1968 article "The Tragedy of the Commons" in which he argues "freedom of a commons brings ruin to all" because if each person acts in their own interest, they will gain more than they lose by exhausting a resource. (3) Elinor Ostrom, joining the argument in Mancur Olsen's 1965 *Logic of Collective Action*, dubbed Hardin's argument the "zero contribution thesis" – that in general "rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests." (Quoted in Ostrom (2000), 137) This point of view has influenced popular perceptions of the commons for the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Ostrom's work, for which she won the Nobel Prize in economics in 2009, counters the "zero contribution thesis" by studying situations in which people *do* cooperate to achieve collective benefits. She argues that the collective action situations described by Hardin and Olsen end in failure because "no one communicates, everyone acts independently, no attention is paid to ones' actions, and the costs of trying to change the structure of the situation are high." (Ostrom (2000), 138) As an alternative, Ostrom studied situations in which individuals "communicate and interact with one another in a localized setting, for a substantial time, and have developed shared norms and patterns reciprocity, they possess social capital with which they can build in institutional arrangements for resolving common pool resource dilemmas." (Ostrom (2000), 184) Her conclusion proposes that the housing setting might be an ideal place to enact cooperative structures because people are in close proximity in which they can build relationships over time.

From extensive multi-method research, Ostrom developed generalizable principles that can improve the efficacy of all types of self-governing groups, which are presented in her 1990 book *Governing the Commons*. Ostrom's principles are high-level concepts distilled from the characteristics of successful commons. Most of the principles are part of the institutional aspect of a commons; they are ways that people cooperate with each other to manage shared resources. Principles I have found most relevant to the discussion of the built environment as commons are (1) clearly defined boundaries (reflected in spatial territories); (3) collective-choice arrangements in which members create at least some of their own rules and make their own decisions (delineation of spatial territories helps determine scope of rules and decisions) and (8) nested scales (relationship between territories in space).

The concept of clearly defined boundaries receives some debate in commons literature. Maja Hojer Bruun (2011), writes that cooperative ideology (theorized in housing cooperatives as a common-pool resource) emphasizes the importance of equalizing class, power, and economic differences in society as a whole. Hojer Bruun explains how cooperatives imply both an inside and outside in ways that can be equalizing. She says voluntary and open membership and the capacity to integrate new members, especially those in most need, can help equalize society, while the bounded entity of the cooperative develops an internal community that equalizes its members. (6)

Dellenbaugh (2015) notes that common-pool resources need to "rethink Ostrom's requirement for clear boundaries"

especially in an urban setting with people of “different identities, mobilities, needs, and abilities” because the requirement can exclude even while forming a community. Dellenbaugh advocates for a “constant renegotiation of boundaries,” which poses a challenge of this task for the institution of the commons especially given the multi-scalar nature of commons. (19)

Wilson et al. (2013) call for nested scales of commons “for groups that are part of larger social systems” in a system of “polycentric governance” in which “the optimal scale for each sphere of activity” will coordinate complex systems. (22) The concept of nested scales helps elucidate how a self-governing unit of a commons can fit into a modern city.

### **New commons and cultural commons**

The commons is a useful concept for understanding all non-commodified systems that in the era of neoliberalism face the threat of enclosure. In my case study analyses the concept of cultural commons can be understood as a new commons. Conceptions of the “new commons” include more intangible resources such as knowledge and the Internet. (Hess, 1) Hess documents the many subjects that began using the term in the years leading up to the writing of “Mapping the New Commons” in 2008 which she attributes to many people “increasingly finding the term “commons” crucial in addressing issues of social dilemmas, degradation, and sustainability of a wide variety of shared resources” (Hess, 1)

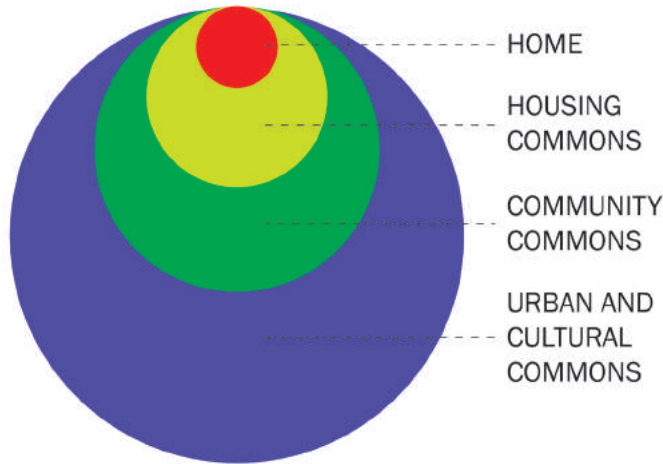
Hess describes neighborhood and cultural commons as areas that have newly been conceptualized as commons because

of their intangible aspects that should not be commodified. “Much of the cultural commons literature addresses the privatization of cultural heritage and commodification of previously unownable cultural objects.” (Hess, 14) Hess quotes James Arvanitakis (2006) “Commons can even be thought of as the social bonds shared by a community, and can include the need for trust, cooperation and human relationships.” This expanded definition includes resources such as social capital that blur the boundaries between the three aspects of community, resources and institutions, but still include all of them.

### **Urban commons**

The notion of an urban commons refers to relationships, networks, culture, and the very atmosphere of a city, according to Borch and Kornberger in their 2015 book *Urban Commons: Rethinking the City*. (8). They explain that urban commons are not limited to discussion of common-pool resources that both Hardin and Ostrom focus on. (5) Common-pool resources are object-oriented, subtractable resources from which it is difficult to exclude users. Borch and Kornberger point out that common-pool resource commons do not translate to understanding urban commons. (5) Instead they turn to urban studies to define the value of cities which should be accessible as commons. They identify density as the fundamental value of cities. The opposite of a subtractive resource, they argue the urban commons is strengthened by people using it. (8)

## NESTED SCALES OF COMMONS



## NESTED SCALES OF COMMONS IN SPACE

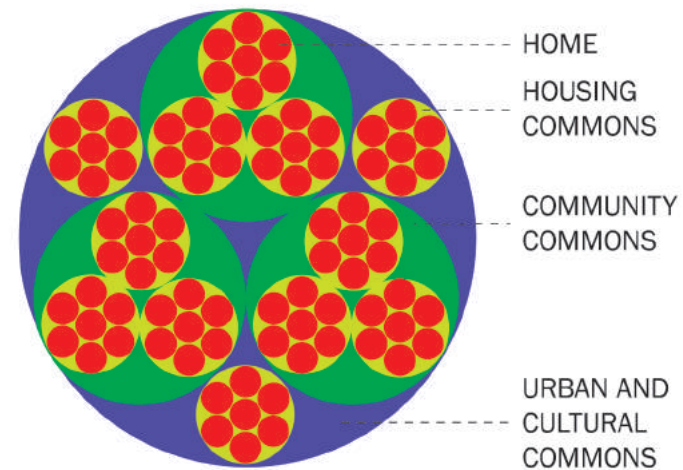


Figure 2-1: Spatializing the commons

### Spatializing the commons

The commons, whether a common-pool resource, cultural commons or urban commons, is not an abstract concept. It is composed of real people, with real relationships to each other and real, often physical, resources. To the extent that these people, things and places are tangible, they are intrinsically spatial. Some aspects of commons theory imply spatial configurations, and some theorists have considered how commons take form in space, both of special interest to designers of the built environments.

Borch and Kornberger begin to spatialize the idea of the urban commons by discussing the work of German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. Sloterdijk conceptualizes the city as a 'macro foam' of bubbles, each a commons, that together create an urban commons.

(9) The commons they create is not as a complete whole, but a rather, the resource is made of interactions between each bubble. (10) In this understanding, the urban commons consists of a network between bounded commons.

Ostrom's principle of nested scales gives another starting point for spatializing the commons, because defined boundaries in space do reside inside one another. Many people's experience of home radiates out from their dwelling such as an apartment in a building on a block in a neighborhood in a district in a city, where each scale implies a different community sharing space with a different level of influence and control. Oscar Newman's 1971 diagram of defensible space relates to these scales as private, semi-private, semi-public and public. This conception of the city is roughly analogous to scales of the commons from a dwelling

commons to a housing commons to a community commons and finally a urban commons. Dellenbaugh (2015) also advocates for a multi-scalar nested idea of the commons but adds that the definition of resources be critically evaluated by members and the boundaries constantly negotiated. (13)

## Community ownership

Community ownership refers to a collection of ways commons have been manifested in current society – organized communities that own their resources together. It can refer to ownership in its meaning as property regime or as a feeling. As the ownership, right to the city, and commons literature has illuminated, there are multiple ways of feeling and having legal ownership of something, which can invoke a variety of rights. As David Harvey points out in his 2013 book *Rebel Cities*, the culture of a neighborhood, created by a feeling of belonging and cultural richness can increase its desirability and also the cost of living there. If residents there do not own the property, the mismatch of cultural ownership and property ownership can lead to displacement. (78) Community ownership encompasses ways that align communities, ways they interact, and resource creation and consumption such that resources are valued for their use rather than their market value.

### Community-owned housing

For the purposes of this thesis, community-owned housing is defined as a non-commodified common-pool

resources of housing, or a housing commons. Community-owned housing is held as a resource by and for the community in perpetuity and so members reap its use value (as a home) but not exchange value (profit from sale on the market). It is shared by being passed on to the next user at an affordable price. Community-owned housing does not have landlords, instead members own and govern it collectively, reducing costs for all. The City of Seattle 2016 Housing Terms Glossary defines it: “community ownership is an umbrella term for a collection of housing models that seek to ensure ongoing affordability, generation after generation.... It generally refers to community land trusts, deed restricted programs, and limited equity cooperatives.” Other models of community ownership also exist in the US such as ‘Resident-Owned Communities’ of mobile home parks and community investment cooperatives.

Community-owned housing is often confused with ‘cohousing’. Cohousing is a comprehensive design typology that is linked with a specific model of community organization. In their 1988 book, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*, McCamant and Durrett define a model of self-management, frequently shared meals and physical inward orientation of small housing units clustered around common facilities. While in other countries, such as Denmark, cohousing has been applied in multiple ownership schemes, in the US, most cohousing is developed as condominiums with separate units sold on the market. Cohousing is a model in which community ownership can be implemented, but is a concept distinct from community-owned housing.

Since 2016 the community ownership movement in Seattle has begun to be recognized by the City government. Conversations about housing affordability, gentrification and displacement have resulted in increased discussion about community ownership. In 2018 the City of Seattle began to develop new funding pathways to support community ownership initiatives. In this thesis the case study of Othello Square was chosen because it includes the first purposely built limited-equity cooperative in Washington State as well as the pioneering of co-owned shared offices of nonprofit organizations known as the Multicultural Community Coalition.

The Danish cases of the private cooperative in Nørrebro, Tinggården Nonprofit Association and the now-legalized squat of Christiania can also be considered housing commons and examples of community ownership as will be discussed in greater depth in this thesis.

There are both benefits and drawbacks of community ownership. It can provide affordable, self-determined, and stable housing that can have an equalizing impact on society. On the other hand, by not offering full ownership rights, individuals do not have the opportunity to reap the profit potential of selling their property on the open market. With community ownership, benefits and risks must be managed collectively, requiring a high degree of organizational capacity. Through this process there are potentials for a greater sense of belonging and community. Economically, there are more incentives to participate in community ownership for those who cannot afford or otherwise desire home ownership than those who can. This raises issues

of class and economic opportunity in the promotion of forms of community ownership such as a risk of spatial stigmatization and environmental injustice.

### **Limited-equity housing cooperatives**

Limited Equity Cooperatives (LECs) are an example of community-owned housing that illustrate its benefits and complexities. LECs are organized in the tradition of the Cooperative or Rochdale Principles established in the UK in the late 1800s and forming the basis of the international cooperative movement because of: (1) voluntary and open membership, (2) democratic member control, (3) member economic participation, (4) autonomy and independence, (5) education, training and information, (6) cooperation among cooperatives, and (7) concern for community. (Cooperative Heritage Trust)

Susan Saegert and Lymari Benitez in their 2005 article “Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives, a Review of the Literature” define LECs as having shared ownership and limitation on share prices. (5) Restrictions on sale prices seek to provide long-term access to ownership for groups of people who would otherwise not be able to afford homeownership or renting in an area. (6) LECs are associated with strong social and human capital and community control. Typically, new members are interviewed before joining and members are required to participate in joint management. (8) In 2002, the National Cooperative Bank estimated 361,000 LECs in the US. (7)

Saegert and Benitez (2005) assert that in general in 2003 “the public consensus supports a locally responsive,

mixed sector approach to support low-income housing coupled with a commitment to home ownership,” which lends its self to support of LECs. (4) Six main benefits of LECs the authors identify are: (1) high quality, safe, affordable housing for low-income families; (2) contribute to stable, economically and ethnically diverse neighborhoods; (3) fulfill some economic and social needs more successfully than rental housing, especially for some populations with special needs; (4) stabilize housing costs through market booms and busts in locations; (5) provide an attractive option for many renters and homeowners who spend more than 50 percent of their incomes on housing; and (6) psychological and social stability associated with home ownership, with the exception of accumulation of asset accumulation through equity. (27)

Saegert and Benitez explain several financial benefits of LECs to their members. While LECs do not provide an opportunity to accumulate financial equity, the lower cost of housing, allows members to accumulate more savings than if they were renting at market rate. (27) LECs can access additional financial resources for members such as secondary mortgages for education and tax advantages. Groups of LECs can leverage economies of scale in purchasing goods, services and insurance. (27) Similar to conventional home ownership, LECs are intergenerational assets as they may be passed to heirs. The authors also cite studies that suggest LEC residents accumulate more social and human capital than comparable renters. This social capital is an asset that positions youth who are part of LECs to access careers that allow them to develop more wealth

in their lifetimes.” (27)

Saegert and Benitez also discuss how LECs can support diversity in cities. “Populations who could be attracted to LECs, and whom research shows to be well served by them, span a broad spectrum of income and ethnicity.” (28) Sharing responsibilities of community management promotes “real working relations” among residents across lines of ethnicity, income, and human capital, contributing to a more meaningfully diverse society. (28) Social and leadership skills that are acquired through LEC participation have been shown to increase residents’ resources and motivation for civic participation. (13) This has happened because people feel more comfortable and effective participating in and leading groups and taking part in civic activities. (13) Security of tenure provided by LECs give a financial stake to investing in members’ home and community. (13)

Especially relevant to the design disciplines, LECs also have the potential to provide a structure for innovative physical housing and community forms that could provide more satisfactory living environments for some households that are not currently available, especially to lower-income families, such as cohousing. (Saegert and Benitez, 27)

### **Citizen stewardship**

Community ownership is also viewed at the scale of the community or urban commons as ownership of resources not directly related to housing, such as local parks and culture. As the 2016 Seattle Housing Terms Glossary states “Community

ownership also ensures that community residents directly benefit from and have a say in neighborhood investments.” At this larger scale, the networks and decisions in a community can be collectively owned even if the property is not.

In their 2012 article “Defining Place-keeping: The Long-term Management of Public Spaces,” Nicola Dempsey and Mel Burton note the lack of priority given to maintenance of public spaces. They find this surprising because the acknowledged benefits of public spaces garner large investments, but these benefits are lost without adequate maintenance. The benefits of public green space are only achieved if people use it, which is largely determined by the feelings of safety and comfort of potential users. (3) The authors define place-keeping as “what happens after high-quality places have been created. It means maintaining and enhancing the qualities and benefits of places through long-term management.” More benefits can be achieved through maturity of public spaces over time such as biodiversity increasing in habitat areas and community rituals being established in public spaces. Dempsey and Burton do not discuss in the idea of place-keeping the aspiration to keep the identity or spirit of a place from before redevelopment through its transformation.

Jeffrey Hou invents the term ‘Community-Owned Public Spaces’ as a counterpoint to Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS), which have come to be a major way to create and improve green spaces in cities. (74) Hou refers to ownership here in terms of use value and engagement rather than proprietary ownership. He argues that community groups and citizens can

provide the creativity and funding that private companies do in the case of POPS. In addition to providing needed recreational and green spaces, Community-Owned Public Spaces have the benefit of stewardship. Hou concludes, “citizens and community groups can be empowered to initiate and even implement projects on their own, which in turn strengthens community support in long-term programming and caretaking of the places.” (Hou 77) The sense of ownership that comes from making a place with one’s community is valuable in the tangible sense of stewardship but also in the theoretical sense of how we conceptualize the city as a shared resource that citizens can create themselves. (Hou, 77)

## **Summary of commons theory and community ownership**

Commons theory offers an alternative way that ownership can be organized other than by state or market logic. People can organize themselves in commons to create shared resources that benefit their communities while maintaining those resources for future members at affordable prices. Housing commons provide most of the rights of ownership as well as ongoing affordability by passing the use of a home from one person to the next without profit from rent or market exchange. This requires a high level of organization and will be most likely to succeed when following Ostrom’s principles of collective governance. Community organizing also has the benefit of building social capital and civic investment, which will further

benefit community members. At the cultural and urban scale, the definition of a commons is expanded to refer to networks and relationships that may be owned psychologically more than legally. Mechanisms for capturing ownership of these resources, such as larger scale community ownership, help reduce the risk of economic displacement from a place one feels is their home.

## Placemaking

The human desire to leave one’s mark on the environment is pervasive and self-evident. Jantzen and Kaaris (1984) note “residents’ right to stamp their own surroundings” that was noticed when it was taken away by the design of industrialized housing. (30) This human desire, including nesting and personalizing ones home underlies the right to the city and placemaking movements.

While “placemaking” is a movement in landscape architecture in which community design processes meet the built environment, a 2013 white paper called “Places in the Making” led by MIT’s Susan Silberberg emphasizes “making” over “places.” The paper defines placemaking as the practice of “shaping an environment to facilitate social interaction, create high-quality public space, and improve a community’s quality of life” but highlights the way to do that more in the process than the product. The “virtuous cycle of placemaking” emphasizes the process of “mutual stewardship of place and community.” The diagram features verbs, processes that are potential commoning practices such as “organize,” “maintain” and “share.” The framework of placemaking highlights peoples’ need to shape

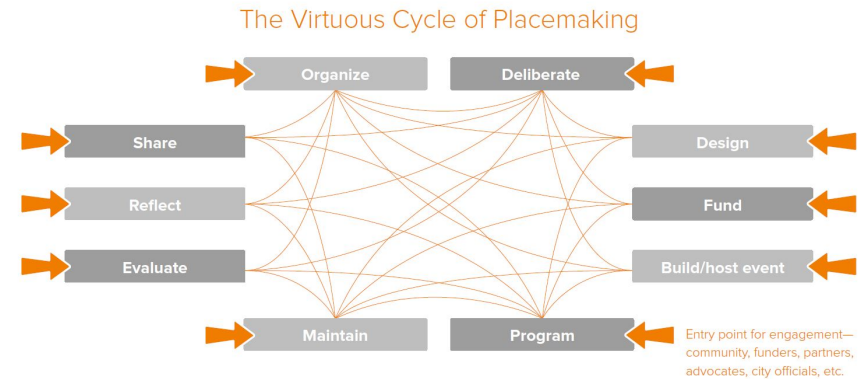


Figure 2-2: The Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking from Silberberg et al (2013) p. 12

space and form identity around place more than the specific forms that may result.

### African American placemaking

The idea of placemaking is familiar to communities who have always had to fight for it. African American communities have long struggled to establish a sense of place in the racist environment of the US. Social critic bell hooks, in her book *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, describes the importance of “homeplace” in a white-dominated world that is unfriendly and dangerous for black people. (41) Set against the background of survival, having a place to be a full person is an act of resistance, (42) and one that is most often carried out by women. (44) A precious and hard-earned resource, and one repeatedly attacked and denied, (46) the safe space of home has often been the site of organizing and political activity. (47) African American placemaking carries an implicitly political dimension in its claiming and owning of space that general definitions of placemaking do not carry.

Nieves and Alexander, in their 2008 book *We Shall*

*Independent Be: African American Place Making and the Struggle to Claim Space in the United States*, bring together African American and Black perspectives on placemaking and claiming space in the US throughout history that prove how the very need to occupy space has been denied over and over again. In the American context, this book provides important understandings for design.

Architect Zena Howard, in her February 2019 lecture at University of Washington, listed important design considerations for “culture in architecture” including “strengthen connections between people,” “build community awareness,” create “memorable” and “transformative experiences,” and “honor unique assets.” This process has led to spaces she calls “unapologetically black” referring to mainstream culture where this is not allowed to be the case, echoing hook’s writing. Notably, Howard’s guidelines for culture in architecture have more to do with people than explicit design. Howard’s architectural work, most famously the National Museum of the African American Experience on the National Mall in Washington D.C., shows how ideas of community awareness and unique assets take physical form.

### **Transcultural placemaking**

The notion of transcultural placemaking is created by Jeffrey Hou in his 2013 edited book *Transcultural Cities* to productively pose an alternative to the overused term multicultural, and at the same time understand transcultural communities as actors on the built environment through

placemaking.

In his 2001 book *Hybrid Urbanism* Nezar AlSayyad critiques the endorsement of “cultural diversity” in the United States on the basis that diversity is always framed within the dominant culture and can mask continued “ethnocentric norms, values and interests.” (16) Multicultural theory is argued by Hou (2013) to be insufficient to address current migration, movements and social change. (6-7) He argues that new discourse needs to address “dynamic processes of cultural change, overlays, cross-cultural interactions, politics of intercultural struggle, and agency of place and placemaking for bridging differences.” (7) Theories need to acknowledge that place and culture are both dynamic ideas that are always in flux. (8) The redefinition of place (quoting Massey, 1994) to “particular moments of intersecting social relations” (8) is a way to move away from territorialized understandings of (quoting Nasser, 2004) “‘community,’ ‘culture,’ and ‘group identity’ within fixed geographies.” (8) Transcultural placemaking is a framework that can encompass these more complex processes. It acknowledges that cultures are not isolated, identity formation happens through trans-location, capacity and agency of individuals and communities to adapt places, and the instrumentality of placemaking for cross-cultural learning, and individual and collective action. (7) Transcultural placemaking can be seen as an expansion on AlSayyad’s (2001) concept of ‘borderlands’ in a way that not only identifies these phenomena but engages in their empowerment and creation, as AlSayyad calls “places that harbor the potential for peoples who may find the potential of adopting otherness as a legitimate form of self-identification.” (16)

Transcultural placemaking as a framework also rejects what AlSayyad identifies as the racist ideology of purity that is the basis for the very idea of hybridity. (5) Transcultural replaces the acknowledged problematic term ‘hybrid’ as a more productive way of challenging the “exclusive notion of identity.” (4) As AlSayyad argues that hybridity is not simply a combination, but a third possibility, (3) transcultural identity can add multiple, and changing dimensions to expand to infinite possibilities. However, the exchange of discussing race for culture is a dangerous one as they have historically been aligned in Western thought but in reality are more complexly differentiated. (10) Power differentials between cultures and the implication of racial constructions must always be considered. (10)

Hou describes six lessons that can guide planners and designers in supporting transcultural placemaking. Recognizing that “everyday landscapes support or impede transcultural processes,” the first is to “support sites of everyday interactions.” (10) “Making safer space and time” speaks to the importance of lowering “barriers or thresholds for transcultural interactions and reduce fear of perceived danger and intimidation.” (11) Structured or facilitated interactions can create platforms for cross-cultural understanding. (11) People are key in this process, who can act as important facilitators for creating new place meanings. (12) “Learning from in-between-ness” acknowledges that constant change associated with transcultural processes requires a process focus. Lastly, “turning conflicts into opportunities” acknowledges that conflicts are inevitable but valuable to “illuminate differences in cultural values and

practices” and can catalyze learning and exchange. (13)

Michael Rios’s chapter in *Transcultural Cities* (2013) illuminates how cultural citizenship is a way marginalized groups can claim rights and create new physical and political spaces. (165) Cultural citizenship involves negotiations of belonging, authorship and power and takes place in zones of difference “within or between cultures.” (165) He argues that rights are important means through which “marginalized groups negotiate different imaginaries of culture,” which happens in the process of transcultural placemaking and is reflected in resulting places. (172) Rios’s case study of the Village at Market Creek Plaza in San Diego shows how cross-cultural coalitions are secure place rights by reimagining “the production of space toward political ends with economic and legal benefits.” (166) Rios shows how transcultural placemaking can extend beyond the ideas of identity and culture into tangible ways to claim legal ownership of space.

### **Place-keeping**

Another theory that strives for social and racial justice through ‘place-keeping’ is led by Winifred Curran and Trina Hamilton in their 2018 book *Just Green Enough*. The authors “want to highlight the multiple and varied ways there are to be green in a wave of ‘green gentrification.’ (7) They advocate for full environmental cleanup of hazards but also the continued existence of industrial uses. A just green enough approach is “clean water, not a waterfront café.” (6) A design solution to this approach relies on challenging definitions of ‘green’ aesthetics

that have come to symbolize a certain style of high-end development. I am skeptical of the effectiveness of ‘just green enough’ because, as previously discussed, gentrification is not only caused by value drawn from perceived sustainability of a place but also by the social and cultural capital that creates value that is not legally owned by those who live there.

*Just Green Enough* points to the trend of understanding placemaking as part of the larger system of urban economic processes including gentrification and displacement. As projects branded as placemaking have led to rising property values without those rewards reaped by existing community members, especially those who are displaced, some practitioners have traded the goal of placemaking with place-keeping. Place-keeping, in this sense, emphasizes the importance community development by and for people already living in a place, rather than the re-invention of a physical place for future residents.

## Design for activities

The design recommendations of most urban design and housing design theorists are based on encouraging certain social activities that they deem important, whether public life, neighborly surveillance, or children’s play. The methodology of canonical urban design literature supports the methodology of this thesis in developing a design recommendations that support community-owned housing by identifying first the activities that are important and then what design supports those activities.

Jan Gehl’s 1971 book *Life Between Buildings* in its 2006 6<sup>th</sup> edition asserts, “it is possible through planning decisions

to influence patterns of activities, to create better or worse conditions for outdoor events, and to create lively or lifeless cities.” (31) While he says more is needed than just architecture, design can be more or less conducive to interactions. (53) Jan Gehl’s adage “first life, then spaces, then buildings” demonstrates how he advocates for the use of design as a means serving the encouragement of public life. (PPS, “Jan Gehl”)

While much of his career focused on participatory planning, Randolph Hester states in the introduction of *Design for Ecological Democracy* (2006) “I observe that the physical city must be made differently for us to attain the needed social transformation.” (7) Even so, many of Hester’s design principles are inseparable from cultural activities. His concept of “enabling form” (18) is especially relevant to designing for community ownership as it “creates places where community members work together democratically to solve complex problems... places that enhance the sense of community and the working effectiveness that comes from shared local experiences and values.” (18)

The focus of this thesis on activities that happen in space accounts for both how people shape the world to fit our activities and then the world shapes our activities further. How our activities link us with our environment is most relevant to design that supports community ownership because activities relate to ‘commoning practices’ that are a defining characteristic of commons theory. There are other phenomenological qualities that have an influence on our experience of place such as feeling of enclosure, quality of light, and sensory qualities of touch and smell. These qualities of space are important but not the focus

of this thesis, which instead explores how design can support people's activities.

### **Activities for whom?**

In their 2009 article, "The Importance of Targeted Universalism," John A. Powell, Stephen Menendian and Jason Reece are writing about policy, but their ideas can easily translate to design. They argue that "universal policies assume a universal norm" and are "more likely to exacerbate inequality than reduce it." This is because in reality "different groups are situated differently" and ignoring that fact leads to catering to those we assume are average. The article argues for "identifying a problem, particularly one suffered by marginalized people, proposing a solution, and then broadening its scope to cover as many people as possible." This way the people who are in most need have those needs met while others also benefit. This approach has seen clear success with universal design advocated by those with mobility impairments (the classic case being curb ramps), but that turns out to benefit everybody. In order to create inclusive spaces, the authors suggest that design should target specific user groups who are typically marginalized and ignored.

### **Housing and urban design canon**

Much generally accepted wisdom about how to design good housing and urban places has been produced by canonical North American and European urban design authors: Clare Cooper Marcus, Mike Davis, Jan Gehl, Randolph Hester, Jane

Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, Oscar Newman, William H. Whyte, the Danish Building Research Institute (represented here by Jantzen and Kaaris), and others. These authors have largely assumed a universal norm in their design recommendations and do not take into consideration Powell et al's 2009 call for targeted universalism. These canonical authors offer carefully produced knowledge regarding the design of the built environment. In the following section I have identified common themes of their work that are relevant to designing mixed-use community-owned multi-family housing in American urban areas.

### **Urban context**

The context in which housing is located is an important consideration to all of the authors here considered. They are concerned with density, access, activities, and demographics. In the 1984 article "Danish Low-rise Housing," Jantzen and Kaaris quote a 1971 Danish report of research that Danes in the nonprofit housing sector were most comfortable in areas with "attractive surroundings," good public transportation and pedestrian environment, cultural activities, and "areas offering possibilities of common activities." (33) Two of Jane Jacobs's main urban design principles in *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) are mixed-use districts and a dense concentration of people. William H. Whyte in *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980) concludes that business people in New York are attracted to other people, seating and food. Randolph Hester (2006) includes in his ten rules for good centers ease of accessibility and frequent use. Lynch in *Good City Form*

(1981) includes as a main performance criteria, access. He says it is important to be physically located near enough to easily access one's daily destinations. Oscar Newman in *Defensible Space* (1972) suggests locating housing developments in areas that promote safety, by which he means dispersing public housing as to not geographically concentrate poverty. (9)

### **Scale of development**

Newman's book *Defensible Space* (1972) responds to the failure of American post-war public housing. Newman does not blame the scale of high-rise housing, only the number of dwellings that share an entrance. He shows that delineated territories can be made vertically, though they do not tend to be as successful. Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian in *Housing as if People Mattered* (1986) call for varying outdoor open spaces in housing developments. Outdoor spaces should vary in size, shape and appearance as to steer designers away from very large and repeated housing developments. (124) Under "comfortable space dimension" Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian give some concrete guidelines for height-to-width ratios and sizes for shared courtyards and note that this determination "requires attention to locally accepted notions." (121)

Jantzen and Kaaris (1984) compile research and design considerations for dense low-rise housing. They find Danes were generally most comfortable in "smaller housing areas rather than big areas," areas with well-resourced surroundings, and housing with private gardens "protected from peeping in from the outside." (32-33) This supported the Danish housing industry,

especially in the nonprofit sector, to move away from very large industrialized housing to smaller estates with low-rise housing in the 1970s and 80s.

On an urban scale, Jane Jacobs (1961) advocates for short blocks for the interest they offer and their support of neighborhood businesses and life. Hester (2006) writes that block-level (a dozen to 100 households), neighborhood-level centers, and regional centers are all needed, recognizing nested scales of community and identity. (32)

### **Delineation of territory and nested scales**

Defined territories at nested levels of publicness is a common theme in housing literature for a variety of reasons. Newman's (1971) most enduring principle for defensible space is "territorial definition of space... reflecting the areas of influence of the inhabitants...towards which adjacent residents easily adopt proprietary attitudes." He describes a "hierarchy from level to level in the collective human habitat – to extend from apartment to street." I have reproduced Newman's diagram of the Hierarchy of Defensible space from public to semi-public to semi-private to private. (9) He describes how residents have more control over their environment if it is clear who controls what territory.

Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian (1986) also recommend clear delineation of the hierarchy of "public space, community space,... and private space" (21). They describe how "group territory" (119) provides "for many residents and their children, a needed sense of place and belonging." The authors provide a

chapter on “security and vandalism” that includes “territorial zones,” and “informal surveillance,” avoiding superblocks that don’t maintain the original street grid, and night lighting as natural ways for residents and others to self-monitor potentially dangerous activity. (269) They note the balance that needs to be struck between privacy and surveillance. (271) Discussing territories in yet another light, they advocate for “user group territories” in which identified user groups have their own places for outdoor activities, (30) do not have to “run the gauntlet” walking past one another on a daily basis (31) and avoid adjacency of “conflicting activities.” (31) Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian give three different arguments for the importance of clear group territories: for a sense of belonging to community, for surveillance of who belongs and who does not, and for comfort of groups who might not want to interact with one another.

Gehl (2006) mentions that subdividing groups can help facilitate democratic processes for which he uses *Tinggården*, one of my case studies, as an example. *Tinggården*’s social structure is reflected in the grouping of apartments around common areas. “The major function of the communal spaces is to provide the arena for life between buildings, the daily unplanned activities – pedestrian traffic, short stays, play, and simple social activities from which additional communal life can develop, as desired by residents.” (57) Gehl uses Newman’s “defensible space” diagram of hierarchy to explain how one function of communal spaces is to make a gradual transition from public to semi-public to semi-private and finally private

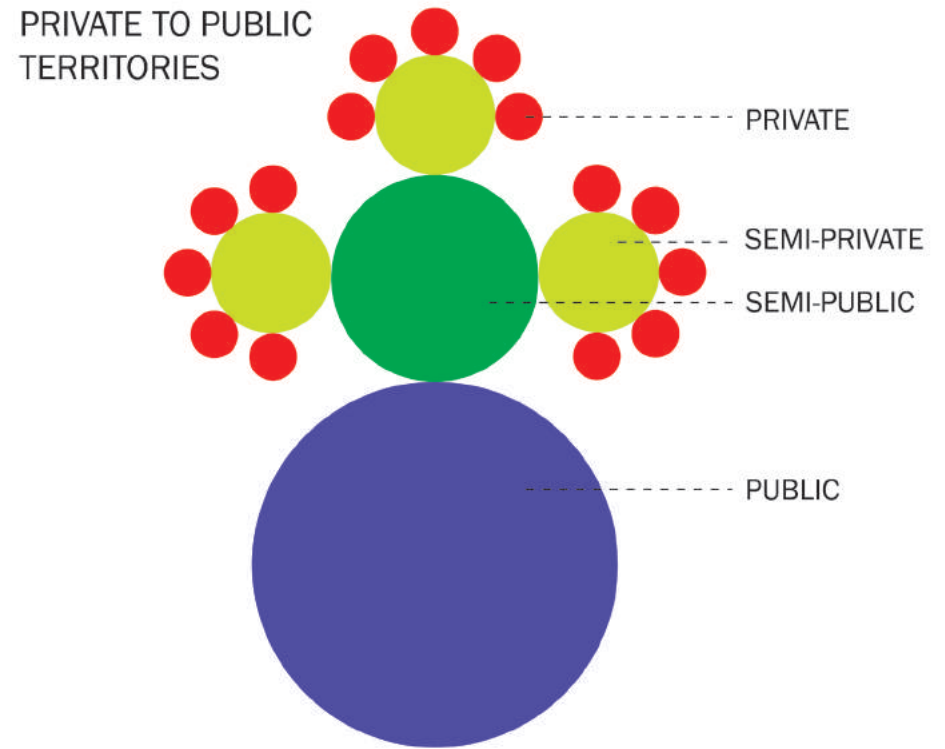


Figure 2-3. Private to public territories. Adapted from Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space* (1972)

life within the dwelling group. *Tinggården* is one example of what has come to be known in North America as the ‘cohousing’ typology. The cohousing model very clearly delineates territory, typically making the entire property semi-private with private indoor and outdoor spaces for residents.

### Ownership and modification

Control, the connection between users and their power over the place, is one of Kevin Lynch’s criteria in *Good City*

*Form* (1981). Lynch writes “a good settlement is one in which place control is *certain, responsible, and congruent*, both to its users (present, potential, and future) and also to the structure of the problems of the place.” (italics in the original, 220) Congruence implies to Lynch control by users of a place rather than an external authority. Control, he says, is the best way to improve another important criteria, fit because “immediate users have the stake and the knowledge to make it function well.” (164) In order to allow for better fit and change over time, he calls for manipulability. (171)

Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian (1986) advocate for personalization, on which the authors expand to include “territorial expression”, “articulated facades”, “component replacement”, and “entry personalization”. (23) They also advocate for personalization of landscapes. (29) Personalization to Cooper Markus and Sarkissian signals home with privacy and being able to make a place ones’ own. On a larger scale, Hester (2006) calls for centers that through their substantial investment and upkeep requirements invite commitment and “encourage symbolic ownership that is filled with personal and civic meanings.” (28)

### **Design for public life**

In his 1992 book *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis points out how defensible space can go too far. Davis says “the consequence of the crusade to secure the city is the destruction of a truly democratic urban space.” (155) This is done through the privatization of public spaces, the “insulation” of residential

enclaves, and the “seamless continuum of middle-class work, consumption, and recreation” though a series of indoor shopping centers and pedestrian walkways. (Davis, 159) There must be a middle ground between delineating territories of influence so that people have a sense of agency and belonging, and complete privatization that removes public life. Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian’s (1986) recommendations for “casual meetings,” “meeting neighbors,” and “friendly encounters” under the category of “on-site facilities for adults” (27) correspond to my recommendations that encourage informal everyday life.

Hester (2006) calls for centers where people gather to undertake many different activities.” (23) He further describes centers with activities that draw people from all walks and stages of life and “exude inclusivity” through their design. (24) By meeting people different from one’s self in a public activity, Hester argues “shared interests may be developed.” (27) Hester encourages designers to inventory “rituals grand and small” from everyday encounters to festivals. (39)

### **Neighborly surveillance**

Jane Jacobs (1961) coined the phrase “eyes on the street” and Newman (1972) advocates for natural surveillance by residents from their apartment windows. (9) Cooper Marcus and Sarkissian (1986) include neighborly surveillance as a security tactic that comes with in territory delineation, (119) as does Newman (1972).

## **Lovable design**

Lynch (1981) gets at the underlying spirit of design that has the potential to bring out the beauty in the world and connect people. He theorizes the idea of ‘sense’ as “a coherent mental representation of time and space ... that can be connected with nonspatial concepts and values.” (131) To Lynch this is the way people experience places and the link to how they feel about them, including place identity and sense of place (131) Events that happen in places reinforce their significance and clarity as do the physical qualities of light, touch and sounds. (132) Lynch proposes: “a good place is one in which, in some way appropriate to the person and her culture, makes her aware of her community, her past, the web of life, and the universe of time and space in which those are contained.” (142)

Hester’s (2006) concept of “impelling form” asks designers to create cities that “touch our hearts” (9). Hester creatively suggests many strategies for achieving this, namely the five principles, “everyday future (improving the way we live everyday), naturalness (being in touch with the natural world), inhabiting science (understanding the natural world), reciprocal stewardship (having ways to be engaged), and pacing (having enough time to enjoy life).” (279) These are addition to other principles like sacredness, centeredness, and limited extent that also tend to lead to lovable places. (279)

## **Resilient design**

Hester (2006) articulates how cities can be more resilient

at all scales. He suggests reconnecting ecosystems and other natural cycles, to be adaptive, and to increase diversity and “coevolve human development, human habitation and nature to achieve human fulfillment and the restoration of natural ecosystems.” (142) This is both because people have destroyed many of earth’s systems and also because climate change requires us to respond to new weather patterns and risks. Basic human survival is the first performance criterion Lynch (1981) identifies as vitality. In the current era of anthropogenic climate change, resiliency for human survival has proliferated in design literature and is beyond the scope of this thesis.

## **Summary of design theory**

The idea of placemaking supports the right to the city movement in that it supports people in shaping the city to suit their needs and desires. The struggle and importance of placemaking is not new to those who have been denied it systematically, such as African Americans in the US. Transcultural placemaking, as proposed by Hou (2013) is a productive way to understand the interactions of multiple cultures and positionalities in creating places. As the placemaking movement has been implemented and led to (at least perceived) ‘green gentrification’, place-keeping strategies such as ‘just green enough’ are being considered.

Design strategies can be divided into those that serve activities and those that serve feelings. This thesis focuses on design strategies that serve activities because it is these activities or ‘commoning practices’ that can be linked to supporting

community ownership. Activities can also target specific, typically under-served groups. Many influential urban design authors have written about design that serves activities, though they are nearly always geared toward mainstream users. Serving activities does not exclude aesthetic considerations, for example ‘being lovable’ design supports the activity bonding of people to places they call home. Other design recommendations are more context-driven, such as the reaction of many authors from the 1960s to 1980s, specifically countering the failings of modernism.

Many of the design recommendations identified in this literature review are repeated in the toolkit for community-owned placemaking presented in this thesis. These recommendations were repeated many times in literature, observable in my case studies, and make good practical sense. This still does not mean they will be the right fit for every place. They are derived from a limited realm of experience, a Western context, and have specific intent. Design recommendations in this literature review and in the following ‘toolkit’ may be useful as a reference, but should never override personal local or cultural knowledge.

## Chapter 3

# Case Studies

These cases give grounding to the theoretical ideas and design theories discussed previously.

Analyzing the cases, especially as to their manifestation of commons theory and commoning practices forms a primary basis for the design recommendations presented in chapter five. The first three case studies utilize research I conducted in Denmark on three distinct models of community-owned housing. Back home in Seattle I undertook a complementary case study of Othello Square.

## Danish Case Study Context

From August 20 to December 23, 2018, I spent four months of living in Copenhagen, Denmark on a Valle Scholarship, a travel fellowship through the University of Washington that gave me the opportunity to study a topic of my interest in a Scandinavian or Baltic country. I chose to study community-owned housing in Denmark.

I studied community-owned housing in Denmark to understand design and the design process that can help support affordable home ownership models, including their common spaces. I chose Denmark for its strong presence of housing cooperatives and cohousing. In 2016, nonprofit housing cooperatives made up 17% of total Danish housing stock while private cooperatives made up 6.5%. While I was first most interested in the nonprofit sector, once I got to Denmark, I realized I was interested in learning about all the different models of collective ownership.

During my time in Denmark I conducted three in-depth case studies with multiple interviews, background research, and participant observation, and in two cases while also living there. My three case studies were a private cooperative called Andelsboligforening Nørrebrogade 100-104; a nonprofit cohousing estate called Boligselskabet Taet/Lav Herfølge, commonly known as Tinggården; and the Mælkebøtten neighborhood of Christiania, a collectively owned experimental community in the center of Copenhagen. I also learned a lot about the context of the various neighborhoods, other instances of these housing models, and the political and economic context of Denmark.

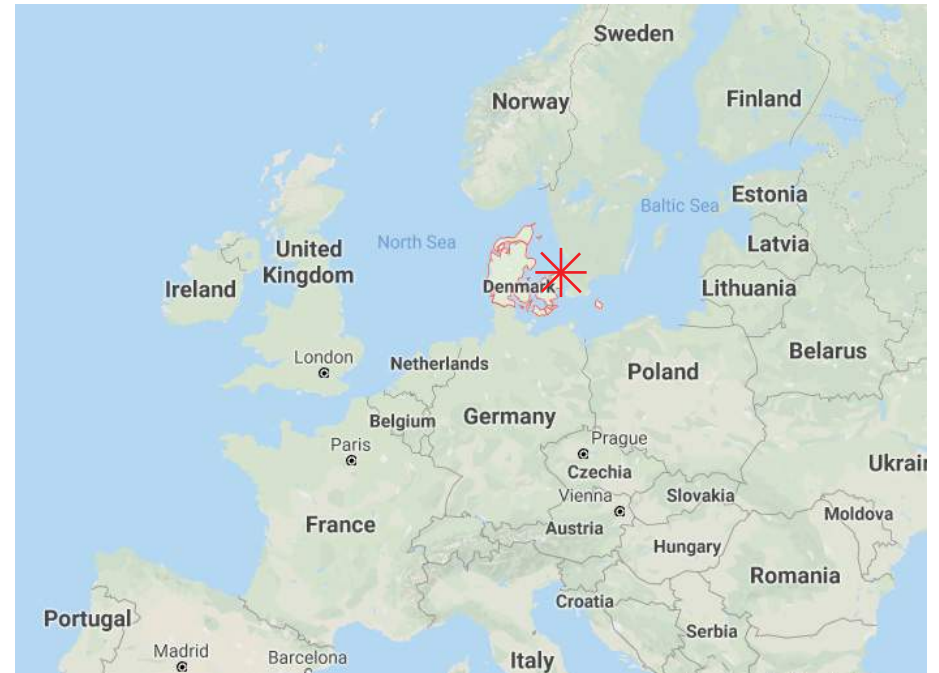


Figure 3-1: Denmark location map (Google Maps)



Figure 3-2: Case study location map in Copenhagen Area (Google Maps)

## Case Study Methods

The case studies I undertook in Denmark followed a case study protocol. Each case study involved mixed methods that varied for each case but generally included reading literature about each housing model, and specific community if available, receiving a tour, conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews with residents that included the resident giving me a tour, direct observation, diagramming, photography, field notes and reflections. Each interview followed the same semi-structured format with the same questions asked on the tour, basic housing tenure information, and open-ended questions to target relevant information to my research questions. I wrote twenty page case study reports for each that answered my research questions, which this chapter draws from.

My mixed methods for studying Othello Square are different because the project is not yet built. I studied published literature, plans, design documents, and organization's websites, was given a site a tour by the lead developer, and shadowed design and community meetings, interviewed Othello community residents and project actors. As in the Danish cases I did direct observation, diagramming, photography, field notes and reflections. I wrote a case study report in the context of a term paper about transcultural placemaking.

I recognize that the case studies are heavily weighted to Danish examples. This is largely due to the opportunity provided to me by the Valle Scholarship to study a place with prevalent community-owned housing. Studies in many part of the world

or country with community-owned housing such as Canada, Uruguay, Germany, New York City or Washington D.C. would have been equally valid to studying Denmark. There are two or three examples of built community-owned housing in Seattle, but none on the scale that Othello Square will be. My hope with the international case studies is not to further valorize Danish design, but to learn from the aspects of commoning practices and related design in the case studies that are successful, and critique aspects that fall short. I recognize the success Othello Square has already achieved in creating transcultural connections that all of the Danish cases fail to do. In this regard, Othello Square provides a very valuable area of insight and is a key example for community-owned housing in the future.

Each case study is analyzed at multiple scales of commons, as defined in the literature review of chapter two. The scales of commons that apply to each case vary depending on the circumstances. This multi-scalar approach demonstrates the implication community-owned housing has for individual residents, its bounded community, and the larger context. At each scale of commons, the case studies are analyzed for the commoning practices they exemplify. The icons assigned to each photo indicate what commoning practice it most closely relates to, which are explained in chapter four. The photos indicate one possible expression of the more general commoning practice shown in the icon. For example, a work party and a community-run building office are different expressions of shared stewardship.

# Housing Cooperative in Nørrebro

## Introduction

Andelsboligforening (A/B) (Cooperative housing association) Nørrebrogade 100-104 is a typical private housing cooperative (co-op) comprised of four buildings, three along Nørrebrogade, and one large historic villa in the courtyard. A coop is commonly understood as a form of tenure in-between renting and owning one's housing. Each resident owns a portion of the association that owns the building. The price for an apartment and the monthly payments are determined by the residents in consultation with a lawyer at an annual meeting rather than by the open market when they are sold. These costs take into account the original purchase price or construction costs of the building, major maintenance, loans, and interest payments. The price for each apartment is calculated by dividing these costs by the area of each apartment. The building is managed by residents, elected to a board, and the administration and maintenance is both carried out by the residents and outsourced in the case of larger jobs.

The coop is part of the courtyard association that manages the interior block courtyard called Charlettegården Gårdlauget, directly translated as the Charlotte's garden courtyard guild. The courtyard and its association represent a larger scale of commons, that I am calling a community commons. It is a significant resource for the co-op and, taken together with other courtyards, for the city of Copenhagen.

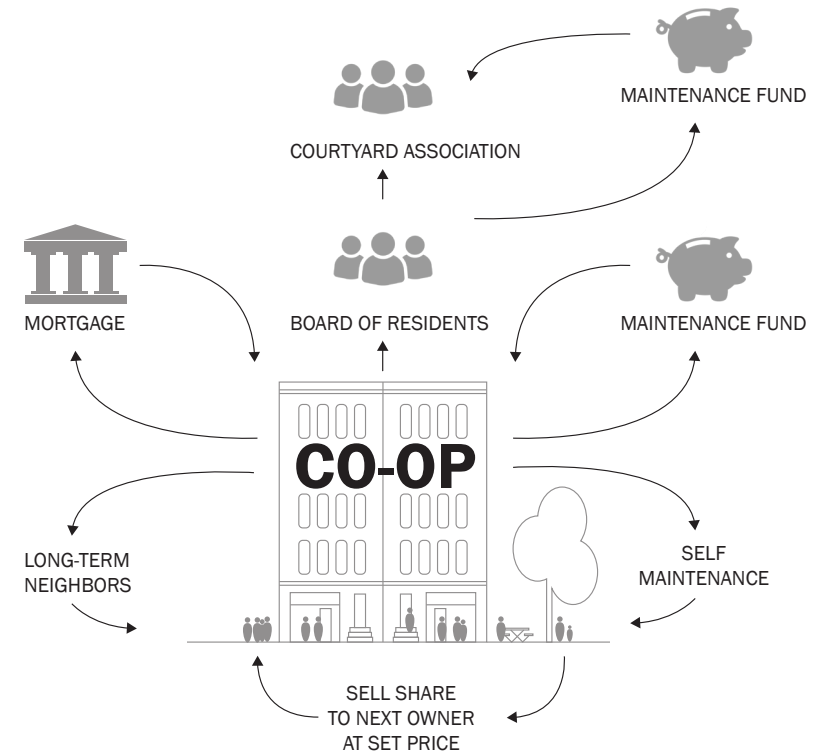


Figure 3-3: Diagram of co-op structure

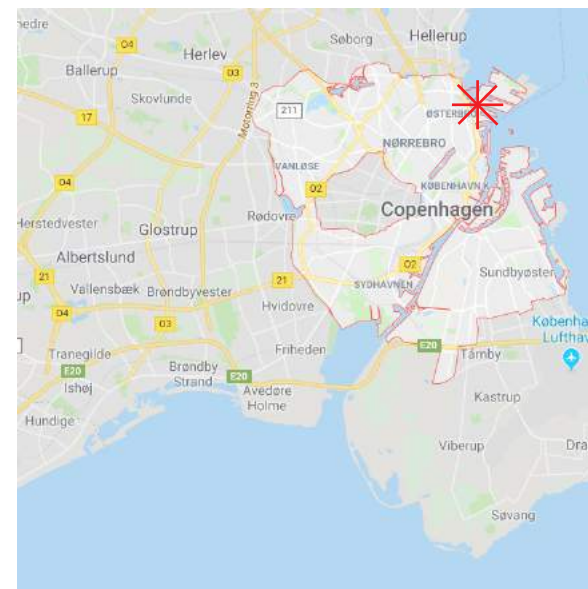


Figure 3-4: Location map (Google Maps)



Figure 3-5: A typical summers' day in the courtyard.

The *gårlauget* consists of a volunteer board, elected at an open meeting once a year. The courtyard guild administers the maintenance of the courtyard, which is outsourced to two garden maintenance workers. They also organize events in the yard: an annual work day in early summer, Halloween, Christmas Tree lighting and Festival.

Mette (personal interview, December 3, 2018) is deputy director and an active member of the *gårlauget*. She explains that even though there is no requirement for each of the fourteen properties in the block to have a representative in the group, they have access to join it and make decisions about the yard. It is independent from the cooperative boards or owners. The group does distribute their meeting minutes to the boards, which in turn communicate to their members. The *gårlauget* members are elected at an annual meeting which is announced to each property through their board. The board members are in charge but the group pays an administrator to send out the minutes and take care of the economy of the group.

As shown in the property map, the courtyard area is owned by various buildings on the block. These official property lines do not directly correspond to the articulation of private, semiprivate and semipublic space in practice. The property lines are used to calculate the percentages of money each property contributes to the *Gårdlaug*, which Mette says is standard practice in Copenhagen.

### **Co-op as Housing Commons**

A/B Nørrebrograde 100-104 operates as a housing commons, meaning its owner-members manage and create

resources that they enjoy themselves and benefit the greater good of sustaining quality decommodified affordable housing in Copenhagen for the long term. Maja Hojer Bruun argues in her 2015 chapter in *Urban Commons: Rethinking the City*, “housing cooperatives can be seen as an urban commons shared by the whole of Danish society, and cooperative members as caretakers or stewards of the commons, which they depend on as their homes but hold only temporarily.” (154)

Who the members are and the barriers to entry into the commons, are the least inclusive parts of private cooperatives such as this one. From my observation and interviews in fall 2018 residents of A/B Nørrebrograde 100-104 were all ethnically Danish with a mix of ages and family sizes. Anne has lived in Nørrebro for 40 years and works as a special education teacher. She says, “I think it’s a good way to live, but also a bit worried because the people who live in this kind of building are a special kind of people. It’s not people who come to Denmark as refugees, or poor people, or people with social problems or drinking problems. I miss that there are so many different kinds of people [in Nørrebro].”

The reasons for this are both because of the mechanism or choosing new residents from family and friends of existing residents, and increasingly because of the high price of buying a unit. Private cooperatives were deregulated when the liberal-conservative governance that came into power in Denmark in 2001 and lifted the “mortgage ban.” This meant that cooperative members could take out a mortgage to buy their cooperative share which incentivized raising the share price in co-ops,

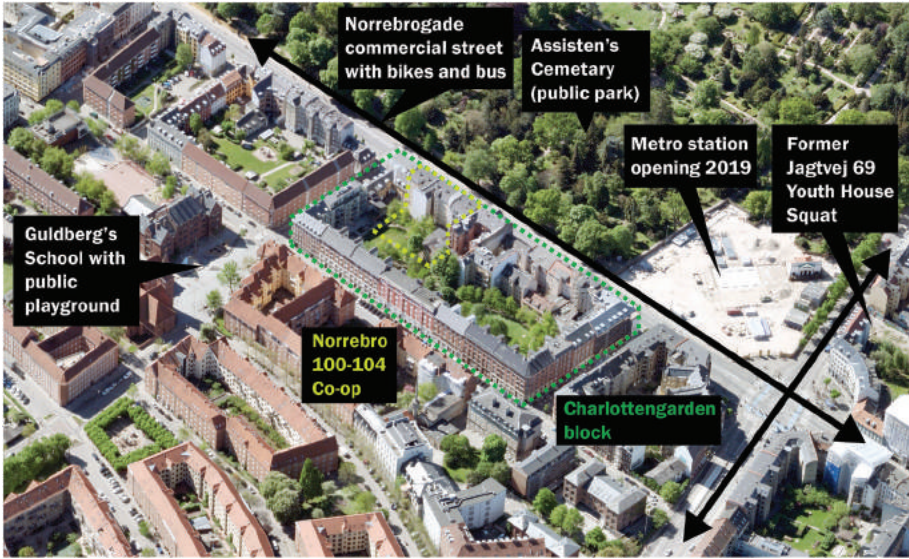


Figure 3-6: Norrebro 100-104 Co-op (yellow) and Charlottengarden block (green) in context (Base map: Google Maps)

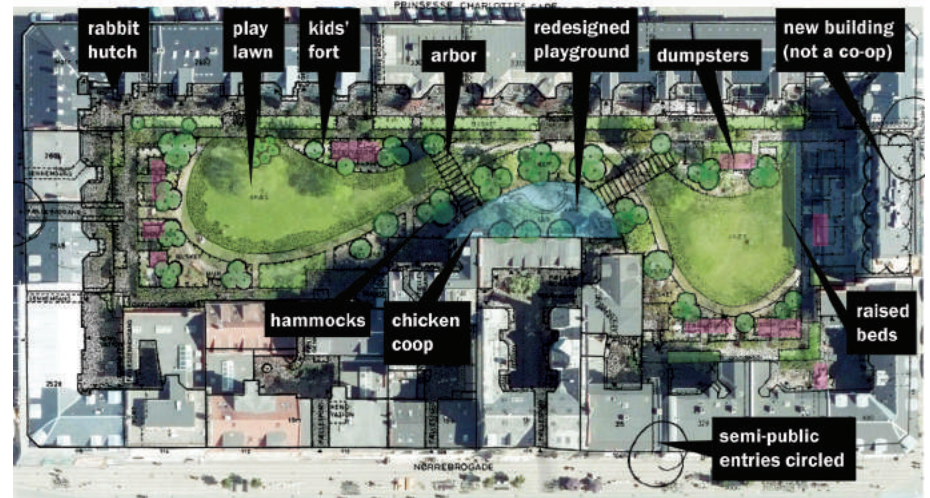


Figure 3-7: Site features showing 1999 courtyard design and aerial photo



Figure 3-8: Diagram of scales of commons corresponding to public and private space.

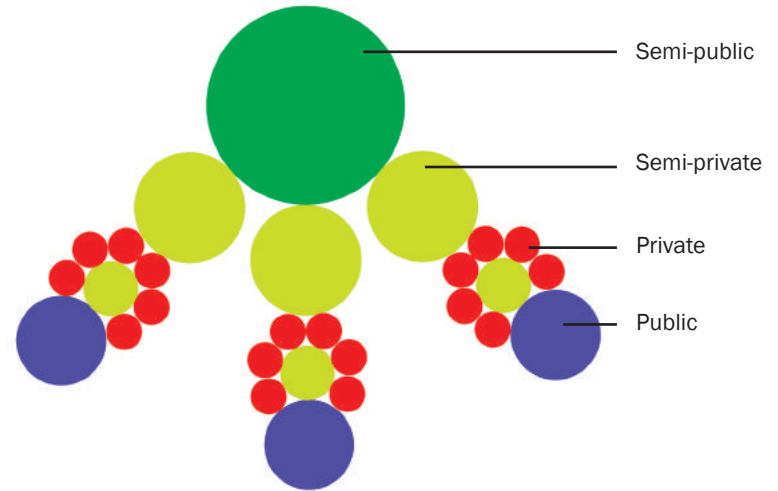


Figure 3-9: Conceptual diagram of scales of commons at Charlottengarden

essentially changing what was once a communal and spatially-fixed financial asset to a liquid and individual asset. (Bruun 2018, 146) Interest-only loans for cooperatives, introduced in 2003, enabled co-ops to keep monthly payments low rather than realistically budgeting for major repairs. (Bruun 2018, 146) Thus, neoliberal housing reforms and deregulation of the mortgage finance market sapped wealth of cooperatives while raising prices.

Oliver, (personal interview, October 5, 2018) who has lived in several Copenhagen co-ops explains from his own experience,

“Before nearly everyone could either put down in cash or borrow this small amount of money. But now it’s that people with low income or no income or old people or young students, they will have a much harder time putting up this money, which is in my opinion a shame because it also means you also get this gentrification, for lack of a better word. In this block it is more or less just one kind of people. There are a lot of people our age [young families]. There’s a lot of kids. But everyone has a solid income. There’s not a lot of people out of work. There’s no immigrants as far as I know... It’s not very diverse, unfortunately.”

The lack of cultural and economic diversity in co-ops such as the one I studied makes it difficult to assess whether or not the commoning practices could function in a multicultural or transcultural way.

The commoning practices in the co-op are a background to the residents’ everyday lives. The most official and dominant co-op level commoning practice I observed was the work day.

Noah describes “that’s the main thing where we see the other people in the other apartments. That’s the main time we meet up otherwise we just meet each other in the stairs. Some people hang out.” During the work days he has been a part of building the herb garden patio seating area, a gate blocking off a storage area, a fence around the bike area and a low shed for strollers and cargo bikes.

The most prominent aspect of the co-op are the resources available – affordable, quality housing in a prime location in a central Copenhagen neighborhood. Outside of their dwelling unit, almost all buildings have well-maintained patios with picnic tables and other homey elements that are shared by the residents of that building such as potted plants, children’s bikes, and clothes lines. One has a rabbit hutch. Being on the edge of the courtyard they are natural places to sit with your back protected and look out into the greenery, other buildings, and action of the courtyard. The ones on the North side of the courtyard receive excellent sunlight, important in the chilly Danish climate. They are also a natural place to go where one feels they belong a little more than in the totally common spaces. At his building’s shared seating area and garden, Noah collects herbs the residents grow. These are important “bumping spaces” where you see other residents hanging out, gardening, and passing by. They are also the areas that cooperatives clean up or improve during work days. The collective stewardship of these areas sets the tone for collective use and stewardship of the whole courtyard.



Figure 3-10: Section through Charlottegården at Norrebrogade 102. Scale: 1"=25'

## Charlottegården as Community Commons

On a block that is almost entirely composed of self-governing co-ops, there is no one but the residents to manage the common green space called Charlottegården. This provides, for those who want it, an opportunity to affect the environment of the co-op and the courtyard. Mette initially joined the *Gårdlaug* at the urging of a neighbor and also because she had the idea to have chickens in the courtyard. “So that was my drive to kind of get into the *Gårdlaug*.” She later confesses, “**it makes it more fun to be a volunteer to actually have the possibility to do something.**”

The organization of both the cooperative housing and the *Gårdlaug* are enactments of a Danish cultural identity. Mette says “I maybe could say, I’m proud of the idea. I mean, it’s really a kind of a value to be democratic in any aspect, I would say. So this is so the *Gårdlaug* and the boards and blah blah blah. It’s part of this way of thinking I would say which, which I would call a value, a Danish value.”

Beyond governance, commoning practices on the courtyard level take two main forms: reoccurring seasonal events and organized improvements of the space. The Charlottegården Facebook page, in addition to my participant observation, is a way to understand community life on the block. Most posts reflect the annual events held in the yard, with some additional sharing of special moments. Mette was happy to report that the Christmas Tree Lighting event drew 50 people which surprised her because normally the crowd is more like 15 to 20 people.

The chicken project was inspired by a friend of Mette’s

who is a gardener for other co-ops and told her that many have chickens. After getting approval through bringing a proposal to the *Gårdlaug* she and another member of the *Gårdlaug* started by building the chicken coops in the yard and gathered a group of people who would take care of the chickens by chatting with people who were curious. Mette reflects: “So it was really a nice time when we built the houses for the chickens. **Because it made me use the area instead of just observing it.**” She goes on, “it could be an aim for the *Gårdlaug* to try to find out how to make more people involved. Because that’s the way I got to appreciate it the most.”

The many manifestations of collective personalization, mostly undertaken by the *Gårdlaug* make the courtyard feel homey and flexible. Mette’s initiative has affected Oliver’s impression of the place. “The general atmosphere seems to be very sharing and open. You can have your doubts about the chickens for example but I like the idea that someone would like to have chickens and eggs its fairly open, you can do that...As long as you are not really stepping on anyone else’s toes you can do what you want.” For Oliver, the idea of commonly owning the buildings carries into the yard. Oliver continues, “Here you take on a lot more responsibility, but **you are allowed to do a lot more both in your apartments but also in out in the common areas**, which is pretty cool.”

The resources created and maintained by the *Gårdlaug* increase the quality of life of all residents. The courtyard is universally likable. As Oliver summarizes, “It’s open, it’s green, it’s light.” The courtyard was a deciding factor for him and his

FIGURE 3-11: HOUSING COMMONS



Resident-owners maintain backyard bike storage area at work party.



Semi-private picnic tables on sunny north side of courtyard.



Older residents baked refreshments and made coffee at work party.



Kids' fort in bushes

family to move in a year before we talked. Like green spaces in the rest of Copenhagen, kids use the space to play and run around and adults seek the sunny spots. He continues, “we use the playground a lot. Shout at the chickens - that’s one of her favorite things to do. We use the grassy areas. You can actually catch a few hours of sunlight a few times a year”

Anne (personal interview, September 24, 2018) says they have flea markets in the yard one, two, three times in the summer. When we talked, Mette had just celebrated her daughter’s fifth birthday in the courtyard which would have been a bit tight in their apartment. The courtyard is safe enough for Mette’s daughter to play alone or with friends. “Nowadays, she can just walk down the stairs and knock on the door of the second floor or the next building to get someone to come out playing. It’s a safe place. Yeah, that’s really cool... and then in the summertime, the door would be open up here [on the balcony on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor]. So she can just call us, if anything.”

### **Charlottegården as Urban Commons**

In general, my respondents were aware that today’s form of cooperative ownership leads to homogeneity in their cooperative and the gentrification of the neighborhood Nørrebro. They expressed a mix of enjoying the benefits of gentrification and regret about the decreasing diversity and disappearing “colorful” neighborhood. Noah has lived in Nørrebro for 18 years. (personal interview, November 7, 2018)

“It’s great and it gets better and better. The neighborhood has changed. It’s always a little tricky with the gentrification process. Well first off everything

becomes more expensive. But it’s also a balance. A lot of the more colorful stuff you get from more poor places - not poverty - but more rough. There’s some color to the roughness.”

The gentrification that is associated with housing cooperatives makes people feel conflicted about the presence of community solidarity in the neighborhood. Despite valuing the diverse, lively, and grungy urban atmosphere of Nørrebro, Oliver expresses a sentiment that the community only really extends as far as the block. “But on the other hand we don’t take a lot of responsibility for what’s outside the walls.”

Even though there is a lot of street life in Nørrebro, there is not necessarily a network that extends from the co-ops of Charlottegården. A related urban network is present in the ground floor businesses of Nørrebrogade, called “Shawarma Row” a cluster of middle-eastern fast food establishments with owners and employees who seem to be well connected with each other. These shops with their year-round outdoor dining create an attractive urban atmosphere where more social encounters occur among residents. However, they weren’t mentioned by my respondents as important parts of their community life. They do successfully buffer the busy street from dwelling units but also create noise that can be a nuisance for residents.

In contrast, nearby Jægersborggade is a street owned by one large co-op that has been careful in choosing its retail establishments according to their values for small-scale and networked businesses, and has created an especially strong urban network on their street. They throw events for the

FIGURE 3-12: COMMUNITY COMMONS



Playing with and watching chickens brings residents together



Planted at the Gardlaug work party (Charlottegarden Facebook)



Chicken coops built by the Hen Association members (Charlottegarden Facebook)



Halloween event (Charlottegarden Facebook)

entire neighborhood on the street and is well known as a retail destination in Copenhagen. Jægersborggade demonstrates the potential of co-ops to have an influence at the scale of the urban commons.

The constellation of interior-block courtyards is significant in the Copenhagen as an urban revitalization strategy. The courtyards make inner-city living attractive to young families with children, who are “desirable” residents in the eyes of municipal officials and bring in funds to the city. (Lund Hansen and Gutzon Larsen, 2008) The courtyard revitalization, including clearing of buildings, was sponsored by the City of Copenhagen and Charlotttegården is a prime example. The public sponsorship of this improvement of privately held land, seen through the framework of the commons, demonstrates that it benefits a larger urban goal than just the immediate enjoyment by local residents. This resource of the private courtyard is only accessible to the residents who live on the block, so the accessibility of those residences is directly relevant to the inclusiveness of that public investment.

## **Conclusion**

Idea of community ownership is so well established at Danish private cooperatives it is unremarkable to residents in everyday life. Co-ops are understood as commons by passing on from one generation to the next as well as being shared between current members.

In the co-op residents’ sense of collective ownership makes them feel free to make modifications to suit their

needs, both individually and collectively as long as they are not bothering anyone else, which they negotiate through self-governed structures of co-ops and the *Gårdlaug*. Improvements made benefit everyone that afford pleasant, community activities like picnicking, playing with chickens, laying in hammocks, or picking herbs. The shared green affords space for block-wide community gatherings. The delineation of space in the courtyard with a semi-private patio outside each building is a design asset to the courtyard. People have a place they distinctly feel is their own, they know where to maintain, and they can make improvements at will with their co-op.

The co-op is well connected in the urban fabric of Nørrebro, from which it greatly benefits, but it does not give back to the neighborhood as a larger urban commons through co-op specific networks or partnerships. Conversely, the rising prices of co-ops and homogenous resident composition have contributed to gentrification of the area. Perhaps a larger-scale acknowledgement of commons could have a different impact on the neighborhood.

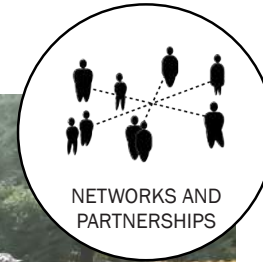
FIGURE 3-13: URBAN COMMONS



“Shwarma Row” on ground floor of Norrebrogade 100 and 102.



Political graffiti on the entrance to courtyard at Norrebrogade



Youth House 10 year anniversary march on Norrebrogade



Car-free Sunday event on Norrebrogade

# Tinggården Nonprofit Association

## Introduction

Tinggården is the realization of a utopian ideal in the Danish socialist tradition that was a conscious break from modernist design. It is an early example of cohousing design applied in the nonprofit housing sector and broadly considered a successful experiment of architecture and social design. In this case study I researched the ways that the ownership, physical design and social organization work together. How does the ownership and governance structure affect how space is created and how do the spaces support community life and governance?

Tinggården consists of two halves, called Tinggård I and Tinggård II. Tinggård I was designed by Vandkunsten Architects and Karsten Vibild, completed in 1978 following their winning a 1971 ideas competition for dense/low housing. Tinggård II was designed several years later. This report focuses on Tinggård I as a historically significant and influential design project that directly stems from utopian ideas expressed in the 1971 competition. References to Tinggård in general apply to both halves of the estate.

Tinggården is owned as a nonprofit housing association called Boligselskabet Taet/Lav Herfølge (The Dense/Low Housing company of Herfølge). It is administered by DAB (Dansk Almene Boligselskab – or Danish General Housing Company). Residents pay rent according to the size of their apartment that goes toward the account of Tinggård, its own

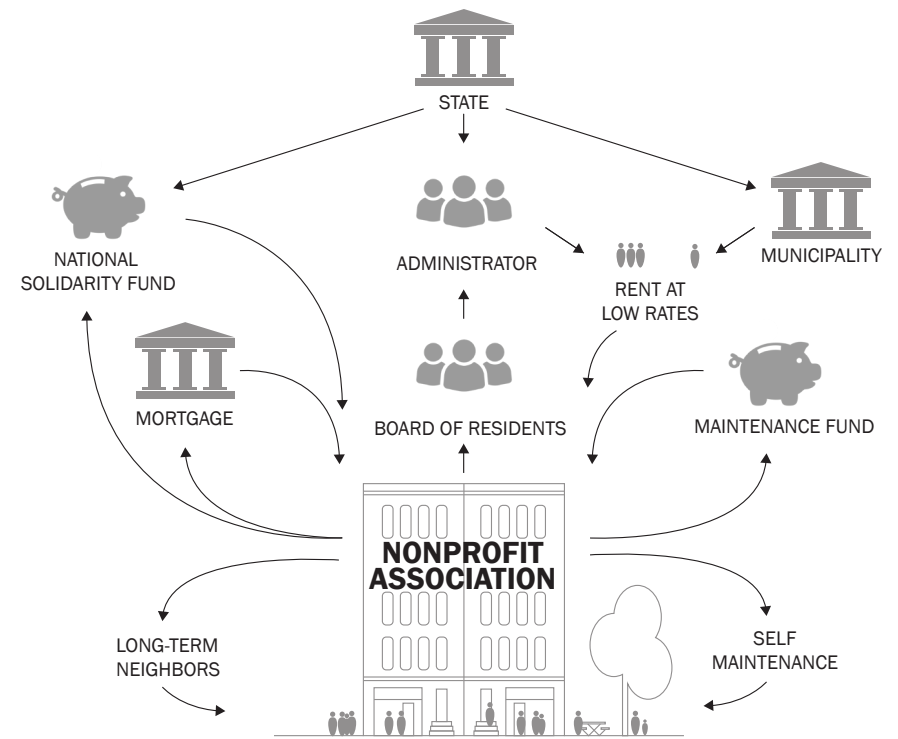


Figure 3-14: Diagram of nonprofit association structure

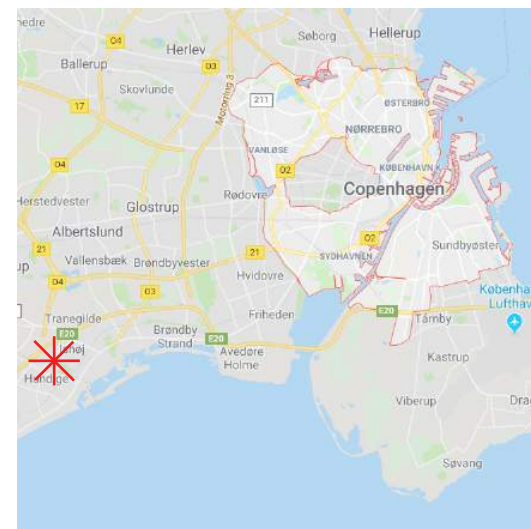


Figure 3-15: Location map (Google Maps)



Figure 3-16: Tinggård I Group B common house from the outside. Note unedged asphalt paths and exposed materials including plywood in the common house contributing to the “cheap” look of the architecture.

economic unit, managed by employees of the association. Since it is part of the nonprofit housing sector, it is highly regulated by the national government and the local municipality can use up to 25 percent of the dwelling units to place people who could not otherwise attain housing, which is a social housing component to the nonprofit system. (BL) It has access to the National Building Fund, a solidarity fund between all Danish nonprofit housing associations, for large repairs.

The large-scale nature of community ownership in nonprofit housing dictates what kind of autonomy residents have in shaping their environment. In general power lies with the association and certain freedoms are shared with residents, within limits.

### **Origin Story**

Tinggården I is an important part of Danish housing design history. Danish low-rise housing was a reaction to the high-rise apartments built in the 1950s and 60s that did not meet the needs of family life (Jantzen and Kaaris, (1984) 28). As Jantzen and Kaaris describe, dense-low housing construction “makes it possible to give the estates a more varying urban character, to further community life among residents and to allow the individual resident to influence the design and use of the environment.” (30) In 1969 Danish Building Research Institute (SBI) set a goal that “Housing and cities must be able to be managed by the people who live in them. Decisions in connection with programming, design, daily operation and transformation must, to the widest extent possible, be taken by

the residents themselves.” (DAB) A 1971 report from the SBI on low-rise housing, based on early experiences of dense-low housing implementation, reported economic advantages and a “greater feeling of solidarity possible” as well as “perhaps more insight, tolerance and richer perception of everyday life.” (Jantzen and Kaaris, 34) This report formed the basis of an ideas competition released by SBI also in 1971 that asked for architect’s manifestation of new ways of living. (Jantzen and Kaaris, 34)

A group of young architects who became the firm Vandkunsten Architects won the ideas competition. Like other entries, their proposal went far beyond architecture to envision a new society in line with the Youth Revolution of 1968 and Marxist ideology. (Vandkunsten) A Vandkunsten monograph states “the competition proposal is a vision, a rebellion against the crisis of the environment found in Danish housing production.” The proposal is composed of three parts arranged vertically on a large sheet: utopian ideas along the top, and reality described on the bottom. “The proposal itself thus arises in the middle, between utopia and reality.” (Vandkunsten)

The competition entry is utopic in combining economic, social and design philosophy. The back cover of the Vandkunsten monograph explains their stance in regards to such a highly idealistic proposal. “Of course it’s naïve to suppose that history should make allowance for utopia. But it’s cynical to ignore the fact that mankind’s continued existence actually is a utopia.” Some parts of the competition entry are paraphrased in English and included on the inside cover of the Vandkunsten monograph.

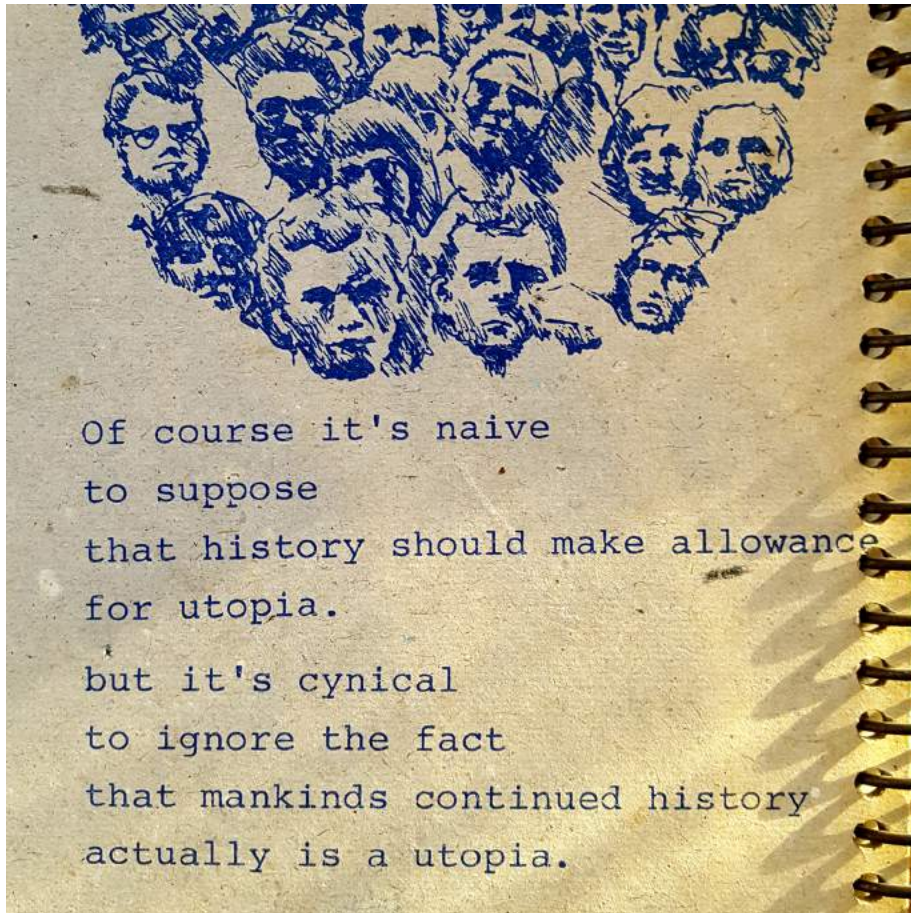


Figure 3-17: Back cover with utopia quote.

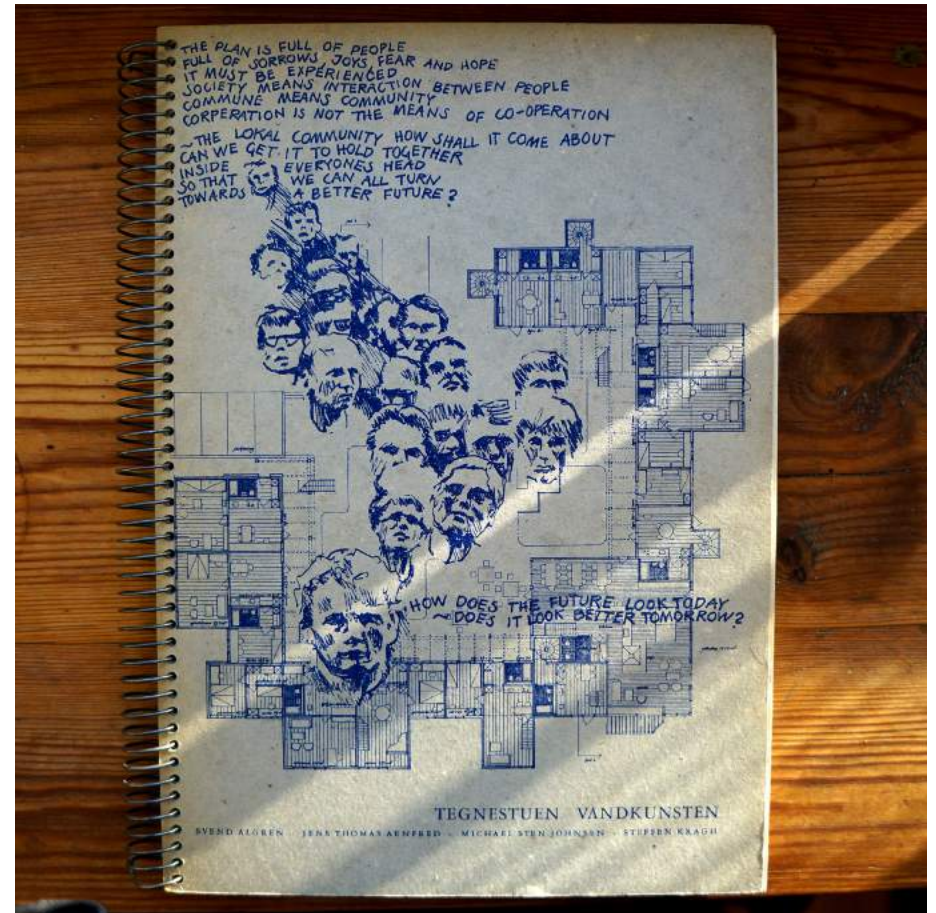


Figure 3-18: Front cover of Vandkunsten monograph

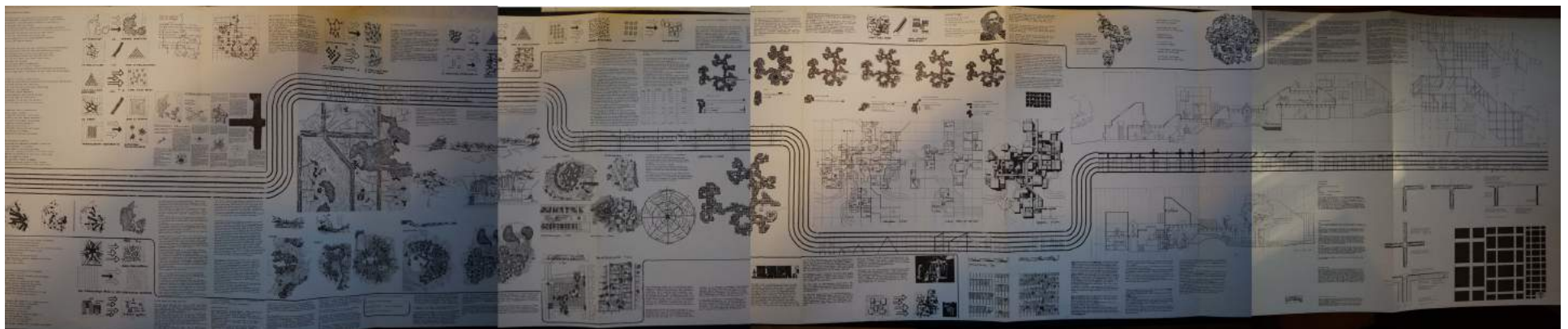


Figure 3-19: Competition entry reproduction in Vandkunsten monograph

Taking on the concept of utopia, they discuss far-ranging aspects of Marxism and everyday life.

“The economic-political manifestation of community is commune:

Common ownership of the land and the means of production,

Managed and administrated by the unified producers,

In as much our productive powers are ours and already collective.” (Vandkunsten)

This summary ends with a utopian vision of the result of economic and social reorganization they imagine.

“When the task no longer is to govern people,

But to manage and administrate in common,

The institutional walls which

Protect us from each other, crumble.

...Do we crumble with the institutions,

Or will we meet again in a new society?

Greetings sister, hello brother, welcome

community!” (Vandkunsten)

The ideas competition proposal was developed with potential future residents as an experiment that became Tinggården. A DAB brochure (that I have translated from Danish with Google Translate) contains a history of the process “where future residents were invited to participate in the plan drawing, even before a single line was drawn” in an experimental process. In 1972 SBI and Køge municipality began the initial stages of the process with an “invitation exhibition” in the main square of Køge and also a smaller exhibition in different parts of the city. As a result of the exhibition 150 families signed up to be part

of the planning group, including Karsten Vibild who expressed interest. (Personal interview December 2, 2018) The residents were organized by SBI’s consultants and took place after “long negotiation periods” between the municipality and the Ministry of Housing. (DAB)

Residents were organized in working groups: “economics groups, plant drawing groups, negotiating groups and organizational groups.” The groups gathered in a common meeting once a month where they made decisions. They formed a residents’ organization and worked with the municipality to prepare a plan that could be built. DAB was hired as consultants and more technical negotiations were held on the implementation of construction.

One result of the citizen involvement was in 1974 Tinggården’s building program that focused on:

- “Extended community in connection with a family stall formed of 8-10 houses per. group
- Possibilities for self or joint building
- Residents’ administration in implementation and management
- Basic dwellings and opportunities for expansion
- Combined rental-ownership housing
- Basically democratic form of organization
- Community house and smaller dwellings.” (Jantzen and Kaaris, 36 and DAB)

The design was begun in 1975 with Vandkunsten Architects. Karsten Vibild, was added to the team for being local to Køge and more senior than those at Vandkunsten. (Vibild) At this point, Karsten Vibild said in a personal interview, they didn’t really work with the future residents more but took their ideas into the drawing room. The DAB brochure notes that design only

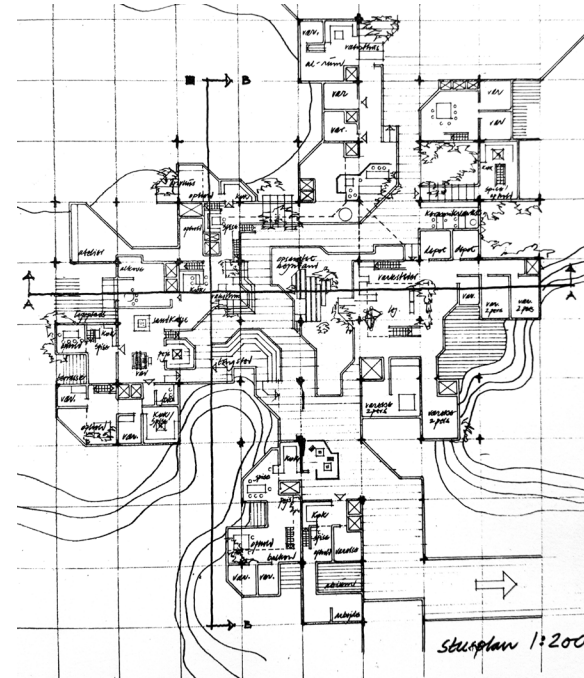
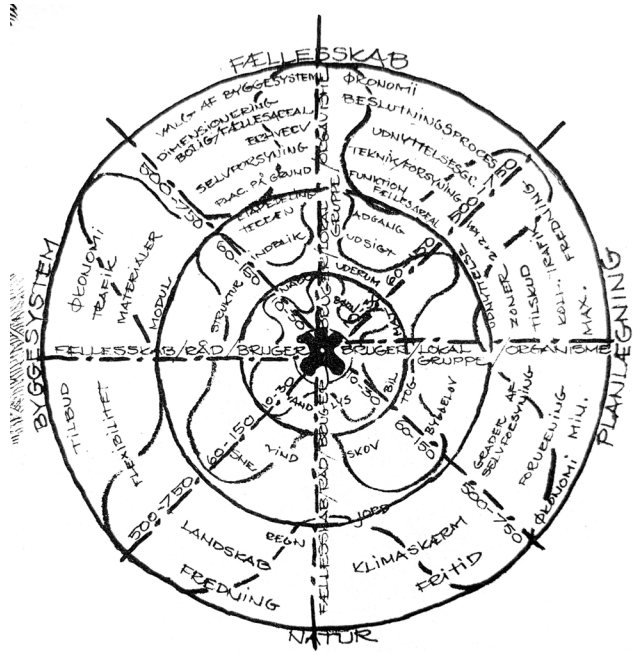


Figure 3-20: Details from Vandkunsten Competition Entry. Diagram of Community, Planning, Nature and Building Systems and site plan



punkt, hvor oprettelsen af boligselskabet blev diskuteret, at de samme vedtægter blev anvendt hertil. Vedtægterne er bygget op om princippet, at alle skal kunne deltage i be-

Figure 3-21: Photo (left) from a brochure (right) advertising Tinggården showing future residents at a workshop in front of a model of the proposed buildings

began after they “abandoned the parts of the building program that were outside the existing legal framework” but does not say who made the decisions for what to cut.

Meanwhile in 1975, a new nonprofit association *Boligselskabet taet/lav Herfole* was created for the new community. The board was composed of representatives from the municipality, DAB, housing of ministry, and residents. It was discussed whether the previous resident association articles of association could be used for the new nonprofit housing association. These articles are based in the idea of direct democracy of residents involved in decisions regarding the areas that they use at different scales from the family group to the whole estate. It was not approved to use these ideas in the actual nonprofit housing association but that they could be implemented in daily operations of the estate where resident input would be very helpful. (DAB)

Through this process, the utopian ideals from the 1971 ideas competition were metabolized through the official channels of Danish nonprofit housing bureaucracy and legal frameworks. In a personal interview with Karsten Vibild, he reflects on this process and its successes and failures though he acknowledges that it’s hard for him to remember almost 50 years ago. “We were forced to get into *almene boliger selskab* [a nonprofit housing association] and they have limits of what we could achieve in new thoughts.”

Karsten Vibild notes that only “one or two” families out of the 150 who were first involved ended up moving in because the process took too long. The residents that did end

up moving in to Tinggården made an impression on longtime resident Thyge’s experience of Tinggården. He showed me the DAB brochure “This picture shows the group. They met and they started to plan “how should we like to live?” She has been living in this group here. She is very old today. And him also. They were part of the group that they wanted to plan.”

Karsten Vibild’s recollection of the final design process confirms the brochure’s account of the architects taking over the design unilaterally despite the original intentions of residents being involved in all aspects of the planning and design. Vibild says “**I must say that the influence [of the future residents] stopped before the project planning. Stopped there. And then Vandkunsten took over. And this [program list] was an important result of the process. And then from there the actual design part with architects.**”

Karsten Vibild implied that design goals were more successfully achieved in Tinggården than the social ones. I was told by Professor Henrik Gutzon Larsen (personal interview October 31, 2018) that the writer of the competition text, a well-known poet, later wrote an article harshly criticizing the social outcome of Tinggården. I am of the opinion that while the physical design of Tinggården I has no-doubt been successful, the societal goals expressed in the competition entry were much loftier and have been partially realized through the resident democracy and social life of Tinggården though not fully realized. Even so, resident democracy in the nonprofit housing sector was reorganized in the 1970s, in which Tinggården may have had some influence. On a personal level, working on



Figure 3-22: Tinggaarden in context. Scales of commons as dotted outlines.

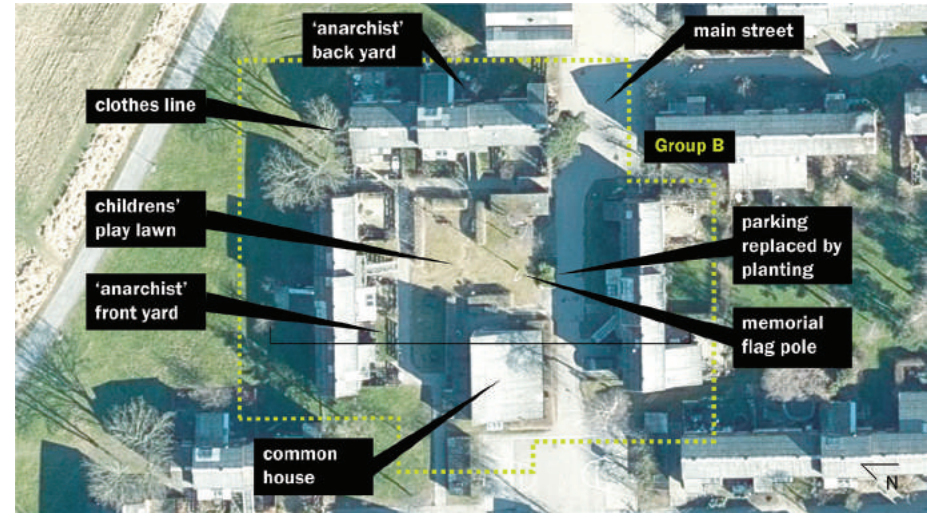


Figure 3-23: Site features showing "square" typology in Group B.



Figure 3-25: Tinggaarden I scales of commons diagram

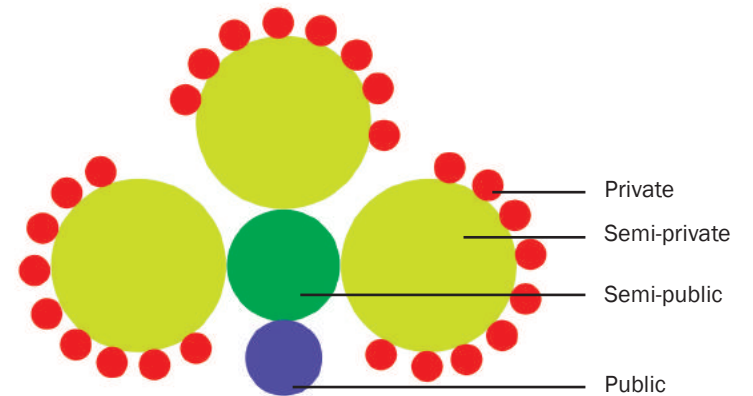


Figure 3-26: Conceptual diagram of scales of commons at Tinggaarden I

Tinggården influenced Karsten Vibild's personal ideology, "I am left wing, so to say. That's because of that process... because of all the new thoughts about how to live."

The legacy of Tinggården has been significant. On the architectural tour, (September 9 2018) Tom says "**Tinggården was the first cut from modernism.**" As Karsten Vibild put it, Tinggården was the "mother" of the "dense-low" school of building. Køge is now developing mixed-use neighborhoods in their industrial harbor which is being master-planned by Vandkunsten Architects and takes inspiration from Tinggården, says Karsten. "And there is one special part of it where some of the thoughts from here are renewed in another way." He is referring to a new cohousing development that is going to be owner occupied by 70 families who are planning the development themselves. On the subject of Vandkunsten Architect's practice, which started with Tinggården, they have developed "a toolbox of things they usually do. And then it's already try to modify it and get it to fit within the needs for the new place," says Karsten Vibild, translated by Rune Pind. In these ways, Tinggården's lessons are living on.

### **Family Group as Living Commons**

Tinggården has a physical typology of cohousing, of which it was a pioneer. The smallest unit of commons I observed at Tinggården is the so-called family group, which I call a living commons. Between 12 to 20 apartments in a "family group" share a common room. In Tinggården I each family group is organized around the entry door to their free-standing common

house that facilitates social life. (Tom) Mailboxes and laundry force people to come to the common house. A common green square, street or 'rambla,' is the common ground for each group. (Vandkunsten) Long-time resident Jørgen (personal interview, November 2, 2018) says, "the thing I think about Tinggården that's rather smart is you can't avoid meeting your neighbors."

I studied Group B in Tinggården I as the focus of my case study. Group B residents, over the years have collectively personalized their shared spaces. Having a shared budget for personalization is an incentive for the residents to work together and even to participate more than necessary to stretch their budget.

Improvements can be initiated by residents within their family groups. Long-time resident Thyge explains how they have a meeting in their common house, written on the calendar and an agenda with items added by residents. (Personal interview, November 14, 2018) Daily yard maintenance is carried out by residents in the family group. Group B has three types of lawn mowers (gas, electric and push) to suit the needs of the different people who take turns mowing the lawn. They have work days between one and three times a year to make collective improvements.

Thyge describes how the Group B courtyard has changed over the years since he moved there in 1981. "We took the parking place out. And put the flowers. There was a guy who lived here and liked the car so much. So he drove [across the lawn] so we put a fence. We said "we must talk to him". But now we removed the fence because he left," says Thyge. When



Figure 3-27: Section through Tinggård Group B at the common house. Scale: 1"=25'

looking at original drawings with Rune, Thyge's son, who grew up in Group B, he notices that the drawings show a sand box they had when he was young and was removed after the kids all grew up.

Family group residents decided to change the yard to reflect their life stories in Group B, as Thyge tells,

"The man who lives there he is handicapped today. And his wife she died very early. And when she died he said she was very fond of flags. He said I'll offer you a flagpole from her money cause she was very fond of it, if you would like it. We said okay, we don't like the flags, but we will do that in honor of her. And he said, and I will pull a flag on top for every birthday in the group."

These stories demonstrate the negotiations that have happened between residents in Group B over the years that have created the space that now exists there. These negotiations have been enabled and facilitated by the organization of the family group, and the delegation of some power from the nonprofit association for them to maintain and modify their space.

Flexibility and opportunities for personalization are built in to the design of Tinggård. These are complemented by the do-it-yourself aesthetic of the architectural design. Thyge pulls out a newspaper clipping that quotes the main architect from Vandkunsten, "**a primary thing is that it doesn't matter if the construction is expensive, as long as it looks cheap.**" Rune translates the explanation, "Because then it's all looks like

people have come together and sort of make-shift created itself as a community project, instead of like a big architectural firm has come and made this.” Karsten confirms Rune’s suggestion, “the kind of people I want to live here on the sort of people that would like to be able to construct something like this.” Karsten elaborates, “always the spirit behind it that means all to them. It means everything to them, it’s not the building themselves. But the spirit back behind.”

Flexible rooms are one successful manifestation of the original vision for Tinggården to be flexible over time. The 1971 ideas competition brief looked specifically for “future residents would have the opportunity to change or expand their home and communal areas, without necessarily to change residence.” (Vandkunsten) This is one feature that was successfully carried through from idea to design to implementation and use. Tom explains “a basic idea that works very well is extra rooms – for kids, desks, or whatever else that can be transferred. They switch two or three a year and the association pays the cost. **The goal is to keep people living here.** Moving away is costly and a lot more work. Moving a door is way easier.”

Power to make changes has been delegated to residents in their yards, within certain guidelines. “It’s her own so she can decide” says Tom on the tour. Indeed many front yards are nicely personalized with paving, decks, planting and furniture. Dorte (personal interview, December 15, 2018) points out the rules she had to work within when trying to improve her home. “When I moved in there was not this [higher fence around my front yard]. And I felt very... everybody could look you know. But there is

very hard rules about you know, it’s Vandkunsten made it. So can’t just do... not like Christiania. So I have to ask for building up this and it was okay if I use the same size [lumber] as this.” She agrees with the intent of the rules. “All this you know if this were another tree [type of wood] and another size that it wouldn’t fit together and it and it will change the architecture.”

Other times residents ask for changes that are determined to not be allowed. Thyge tells the story of how his children wanted a place to hang out without all the tourists coming to look at Tinggården in the early days. They wanted to make a backyard behind their dwelling. But Thyge said the architects intended the outside of the estate to have walls that rose up from the fields like a castle without any plants obstructing the view except for trees at the corners. Thyge says “we are socialists but we are also anarchists” so his family built a little patio and planted some shrubs. There were many meetings to discuss whether this was allowed and it was finally decided that it was not, but Thyge’s family kept it anyway.

### **Tinggården as Housing Commons**

Tinggården is an economic and administrative unit, which makes up its own nonprofit association. It can be considered a commons because it is non-commodified housing that is owned and controlled by its residents, who are simultaneously renters from the association they own. The management of the association is done through the official resident democracy, which is separate from the family group organization.

FIGURE 3-28: LIVING COMMONS



Lunch after work day (using allocated budget) at the Group B common house.



Jorgen's family's front yard (sanctioned)



Common square and play lawn with resident-added flag, Group B



Thyge's family's 'anarchist' backyard (unsanctioned)

Jørgen is the chair of Tinggården's resident board. He explains how it works. "If you have a proposal you have to submit it 14 days before the meeting, and they have read it and then we can vote on it." He describes negotiating with the administrator DAB about rent increases to fund needed new windows. There is a large amount of technical knowledge about the systems needed to understand and work with this process. In the end Jørgen had to personally argue for lower rent increases and concludes "So we have some democracy I think." However, this sort of democracy is not approachable for a lot of people. He says, "It's very difficult to get people to participate and it's getting more and more difficult. Many people just close the door and say "that's just not my responsibility" or something."

Tinggården includes some amenities shared by the whole community. The large gathering hall in Tinggården I is used in many ways. Residents can reserve it and hire a caterer, with space for seats for 70-100 people. They typically hold a harvest party, new years eve, Halloween for kids and a Christmas market. It is also used as a badminton court, a play space for a nearby kindergarten and local nannies. It is a little problematic to have large common houses in the middle of the estate due to loud music at night and people standing around outside according to both Tom and Thyge. Additionally, garden plots are available to all residents as well as formal and informal outdoor gathering areas.

The commons of Tinggården as a whole comes through in the strong origin story and political identity that I learn about from the residents. Tinggården has an identity of

being a community of socialist thinkers that has lasted ever since its original radical socialist ideology from the 1971 ideas competition and the settlement's first ideological residents. Since part of that ideology was to be affordable nonprofit housing, and to up to include 25% residents placed by the municipality, Tinggården has developed as a place that is both a tight-knit, politically active community and a place of bridging socio-economic differences.

**"We are not so similar, we leave space for difference here...**If you want to be a little hippie, or leave a lot of mess and nobody is coming to say "it's not allowed" says Dorte. She continues, "most of the people here live here because they want the way of living here. But there's 25% who don't. And you can feel that. They don't want the same community and so on." Thyge explains the significance of this in daily life. "When things get wrong, when there are bikes and they make noise, we go and talk to them. It's our place. Everyone is responsible. Everyone acts in many ways. There are some people here who are very poor and have many problems. Some people you cannot reach. Then the social system will help them. We tell them, you have to go in there you have to help them because the small children there, her mother is an alcoholic and it's really extreme."

The simultaneous community and room for difference is enabled by the architecture of Tinggården I. Residents see each other in their daily life and have places to come together as a community in the outdoor common areas and common houses. The flexibility of the different apartment types and extra rooms has allowed people to stay in the community over changes in

FIGURE 3-29: HOUSING COMMONS



Garden beds available to all residents



Large common house/ gym for all of Tinggaarden



Informal seating in the common garden area



Clothes lines made by residents and available to all

life stages (although not serving the aging population ideally). Residents have ways to shape their physical environment, to care for it, and in so doing have the opportunity to form a stronger attachment to it as their home and community.

These aspects of the built environment in Tinggårdén allow residents to enact lives in line with some aspects of the socialist ideology expressed in the 1971 ideas competition. Parts of the vision such as common ownership of “the means of production,” are outside of the scope that Tinggårdén could address. The settlement fulfills the vision “to manage and administrate in common” in its physical structure of family groups. Community formation happens in everyday life of living people through everyday practices of maintenance and common governance. These practices have succeeded in being “able to produce common experience, common consciousness” described as political activity by Thyge and Dorte. It has to some extent succeeded in “crumbl[ing]” the “institutional walls which protect us from each other” in leaving room for social difference, as Dorte describes.

### **Tinggårdén as Cultural Commons**

Tinggårdén is a famous place. It is a feature of Jan Gehl’s classic *Life Between Buildings* and McCamant and Durrett’s *Cohousing*. For many years, the place was overwhelmed by visiting architects coming by the busload, tells both Tom and Thyge. Tinggårdén’s influence thus goes much farther than its immediate context itself.

Many residents of Tinggårdén are politically outspoken.

Thyge shows me an old copy of the Tinggårdén newsletter with a declaration of Tinggårdén as a nuclear free zone and a discussion of marijuana, which I believe are examples of the political awareness Dorte describes. I am reminded that early on, new residents were interviewed for their ideas before accepted to live in Tinggårdén. To this day, Dorte says most people who live in Tinggårdén are “socially passionate.” Thyge, Lilian Elsberg, (personal interview December 2, 2018) and Jørgen are active in local organizations and political activity, partly sustained by their home community. However, Tinggårdén does not need to negotiate an urban space being on the very edge of the Copenhagen metropolitan area.

### **Conclusion**

Tinggårdén was designed to foster social cohesion and resident ownership and has, by many accounts been successful in that. Tinggårdén very clearly exemplifies clearly delineated territories moving from the public to semi-public to semi-private and private. In fact, it is used by Gehl (2006) as an example of this strategy. Personalization in individual yards is important to residents and lends a feeling of ownership and hominess to the estate. On the other hand residents not having complete freedom of modification makes them aware of the confines of the nonprofit governance and subtracts from their quality of life. The common areas in each family group achieve a sense of shared ownership, stewardship, and neighborly interactions and surveillance.

The aesthetic design of Tinggårdén with its warm

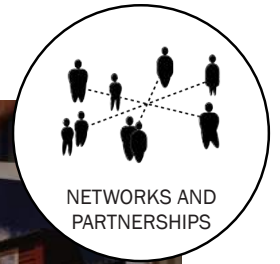
traditional materials is loved by all. The painting of the wood houses was for a time a tradition of the residents and added to the sense of collective care of the community. The human scale and approachable aesthetic relates to those it seeks to attract, those who would like to live somewhere they built themselves.

Tinggården originated from an idealistic movement championed by the Danish building institute. Tinggård is not a place-keeping project but rather an experiment in design and culture willingly undertaken on a greenfield site. As a suburban development, it is not integrated into an urban context but instead gives residents a connection to the outdoors. Tinggård's architectural interest gives it some connections to the outside, that it encourages by Tom and others giving tours. The idealism of Tinggård, as well as its coordinated architecture and governance structure have proven to be self-reinforcing and a well-deserved international precedent for housing community design.

FIGURE 3-30: CULTURAL COMMONS



Book on nonprofit housing featuring Tinggaarden



Local forest churchyard with parish members



# Christiania

## Introduction

Christiania is a unique community, founded in 1971 as part of the youth rebellion and squatters' movement as a 'freetown' in central Copenhagen. It is home to around 900 residents (680 adults and 200 children) who made a foundation that bought most of the land and govern themselves without leaders through consensus. (John, public tour December 22, 2018) Christiania is open to the public and has a rich cultural scene. In this case study I researched the ways that the ownership, physical design and social organization work together. How does the ownership and governance structure affect how space is created and how do the spaces support community life and governance? Through answering this question I discuss different forces that encompass governance, sense of ownership, and everyday life.

At the outset of this case study it is important to note that there is not one true story of Christiania; its story is made up of a plurality of voices, all valid, that have different lived experience of what Christiania has been, is, and should be. As Anders Jørgensen put it on a September 15, 2018 public tour, it is a narrative society. The highest authority of Christiania is the community meeting where many people's voices are heard and decisions are made through consensus. There are books written about Christiania and a local archive but there is no decisive source of information. Thus, I value oral history as much as written sources and always cite the speaker.

I focused on Mælkebøtten, one of Christiania's fourteen

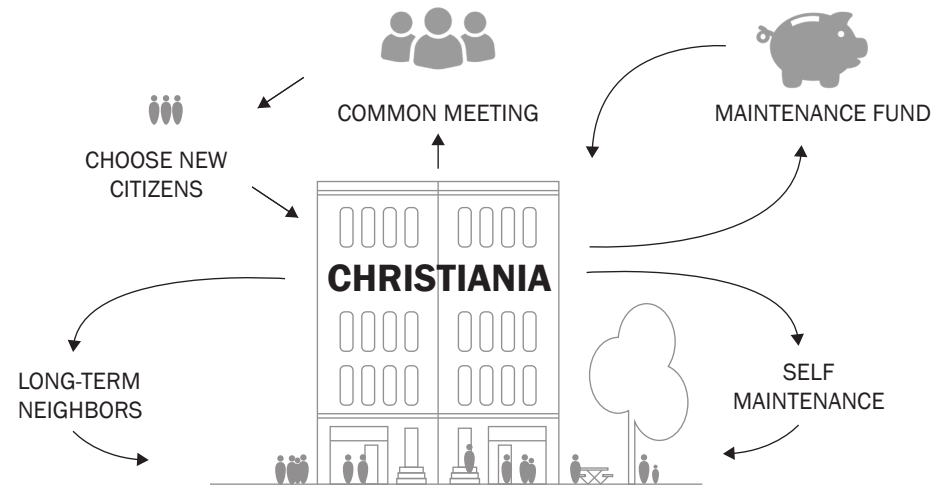


Figure 3-31: Diagram of Christiania structure

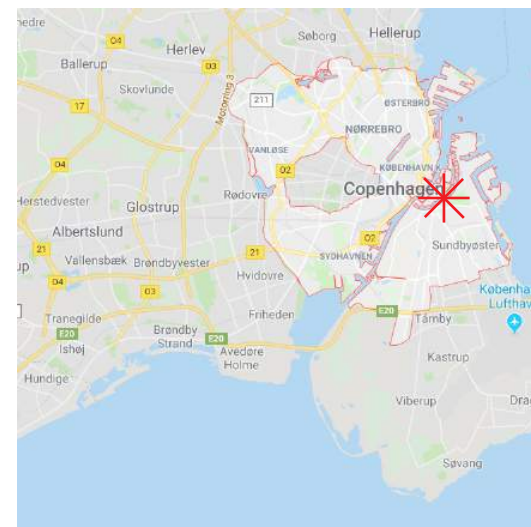


Figure 3-32: Christiania location map (Google Maps)



Figure 3-33: The entrance to Mælkebøtten is a historic gate that draws unwanted tourists to resident's homes.

neighborhood areas but discovered my informants seemed to more closely identify with Christiania as a whole. It is physically an enclave inside one of the rampart points (a bastion) which is nationally protected as a historic landmark (John). Mælkebøtten has about 85 adult residents living in both historic buildings and self-built houses.

## Origin Story

Christiania was squatted in 1971 and has a complex and unique history since then. There are many ways to tell the history but this report will focus on the physical and ownership aspects of it. Long-time resident John's public tour that I recorded gives an introduction:

Basically the area is an old Citadel surrounding Copenhagen, built in the last half of the 17th century, at a time where most European major cities were fully fortified. So you could defend against invasions ... to keep the Swedish out of Copenhagen...

And without giving you like the biggest history lesson, it was part of the youth rebellion in the 60s, what some people refer to as the hippie movement, which I think is really flattening the subject because the rebellion in the 60s with a lot of different topics...

As part of the squatters movement, the squatters took over abandoned buildings, they really didn't do it to take ownership but they did it as a means of political protest trying to shed light on the topic of a broad feeling of lacking opportunities amongst young people.

We celebrate a birthday every year on the 26th of September. And the reason why we have a fixed date is because at the time in Copenhagen was underground magazine called "Hovedbladet" the Main Magazine and

it was like the voice of this underground movement. And this generation and one of the lead journalists he heard rumors about this place and he did an excursion into this place, found a hole in the fence and climbed in took a lot of pictures and fell in love with the place and on the 26th of September 1971, his magazine came out with a frontline new story urging everybody who wanted to be part of building this alternative society to jump on bus line eight, which for many years was all local line running out here, and emigrate to Christiania. And within a very short period of time, more than 1000 people followed suit.

The story of how Christiania stayed and became what it is today has many twists and turns. Christiania purchased part of their property in 2011 and are currently working on figuring out how to manage the new opportunities and challenges owning the property has created. (Mette Prag, personal interview December 14, 2018)

There is not a simple answer to how Christiania has physically come to be the way it is. The answer has to do with the unique location, ownership, governance and history of the community. Anders Jørgensen expresses this in a personal interview (December 11, 2018), "the out-spring of our talk, it has something to do with the physical shape of the area. But as you can hear, we often end up in the mental shape of the area... So that is the largest goal we have it is to govern and manage the mental shape of our place." Anders suggests that Christiania has been **shaped by its inhabitants with an approach rather than with a design**. I have identified eight forces that affect this approach: the community's location in central Copenhagen;

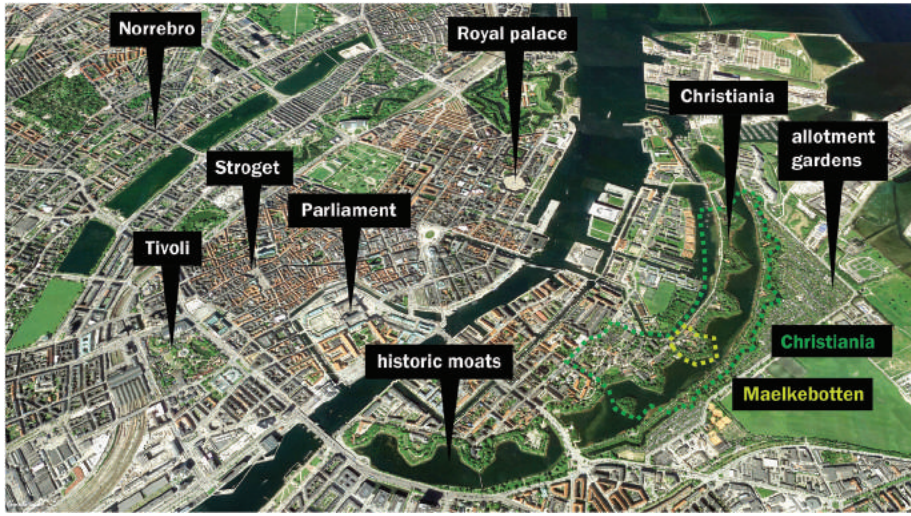


Figure 3-34: Christiania in context of Copenhagen. Scales of commons as dotted outlines.

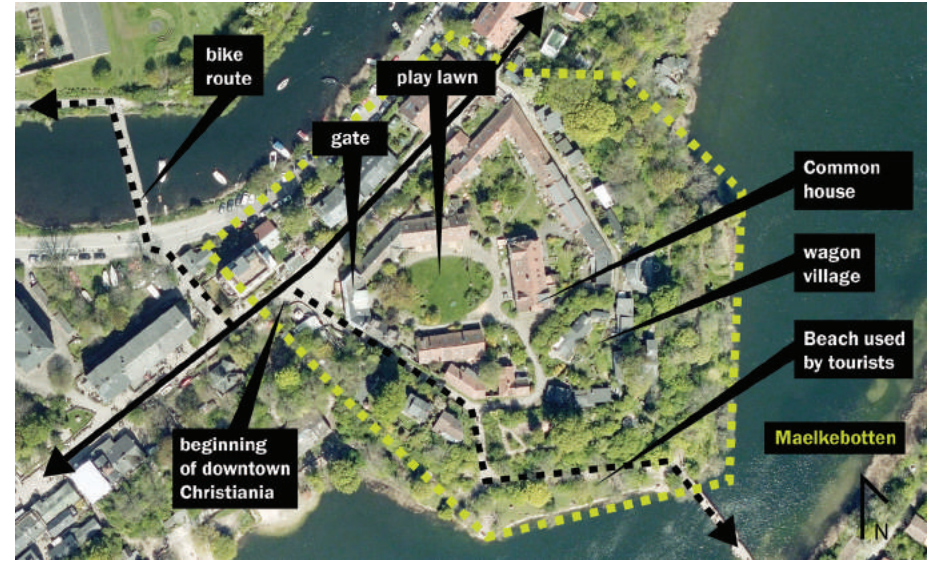


Figure 3-35: Site features of Maelkøbotten.



Figure 3-36: Christiania scales of commons diagram. (Christiania continues beyond map)

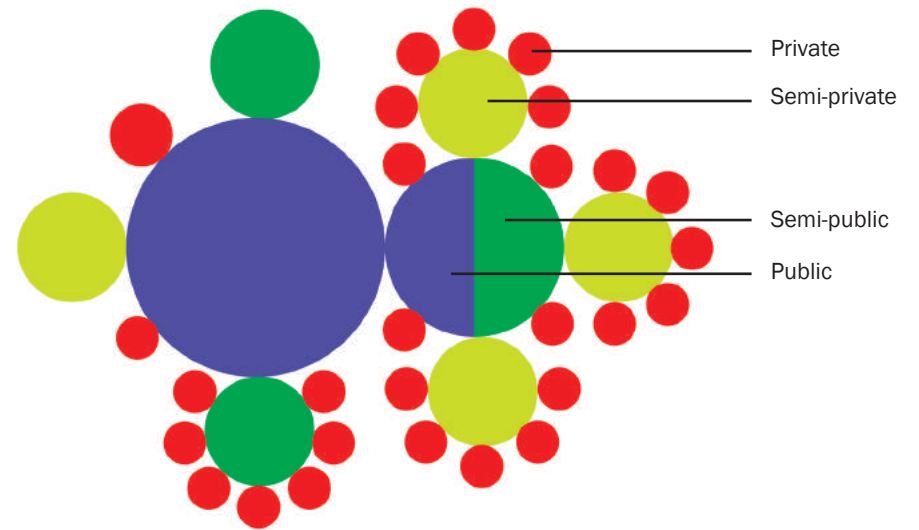


Figure 3-37: Conceptual diagram of scales of commons at Christiania

important points and incremental changes; the original idea of non-hierarchical occupation of land; the nature of users' rights, tension between Christiania and the Danish State, tension between individuals and central organization, tension between planning and not planning, and the changed ownership structure. I touch on some of these themes in the analysis of different types of housing Christiania exemplifies.

### **Christiania as Housing Commons**

Christiania is simultaneously, at almost all scales, a housing commons and a community commons. As a squat, it is as much political statement as it is a home. It is important to those living there, and also to many Danes and others who recognize its social and political significance. Christiania exemplifies the complex ways different commons are integrated into different parts of people's lives, at different times, in overlapping ways.

The entire community of Christiania is also its basic unit, which highly values a nonhierarchical structure. The decentralized nature of Christiania lends itself to the pattern of mostly resolving issues one by one on the local level (there are 14 local communities each with its meeting, local cashier and building representatives) and less frequently all coming together to make decisions of community-wide importance.

John's tour discusses the mission of Christiania.

“[When Christiania citizens first organized the new society] the core idea was formulated to create an alternative society that was **financially independent, where the individual had the right to express themselves freely under responsibility for the community**, which is not complete freedom and

anarchy, but under responsibility for the community ... (Figure 1)”

On Anders' public tour he tells of three ideological pillars of Christiania: “**flat structure, common ownership, and caring for the environment.**” Long-time resident Richard Lee Steven's version has slightly different three “basic principles: (1) no private property as all of the property is commonly owned by the residents, even the new houses that are built by residents, (2) no leaders as the decisions are made in a consensus democratic process which involves everyone in the community in all decisions, especially the decisions regarding the local living areas, and (3) no voting as all decisions are made in a consensus democratic process which involves everyone in all decisions.” (Email, December 18, 2018) In my interview with Anders he stresses that the idea that has kept Christiania together, from the inside, is the idea of self-governance. The basic unit of Christiania's self-governance is the meeting, held at the level of the neighborhood area and Christiania as a whole, as well as other specialized subject meetings such as finance and built environment.

The result of this flat structure and common ownership is that everyone I talk to feels a sense of ownership over the entirety of Christiania. Asterix, who has lived in Christiania since its founding says “**I feel I own the property together with everybody.**” (Personal interview December 2, 2018) Richard clearly expresses the collective ownership of Christiania and what it means for his life. “There is no question whatsoever, that I have a sense of ownership over the common spaces. Because



Figure 3-38: Section through Mælkebøtten lawn, "Omleten." Scale 1"=25'

I know that we all have a responsibility for taking care of and repairing the common spaces that we use.”

Anders has a nuanced understanding of what collective ownership means in Christiania and how it affects everyday life and use of space. Christiania’s form of collective ownership is founded in the idea of squatting or occupying property as a form of political demonstration. Even though Christiania as a whole is no longer squatting, within it each citizen has a user’s right which affects the way people use and experience space.

Because **ownership I feel is a user’s right...**

And I’m confident by that... in the moment, because I can see that as a problem well. I think in many ways, it’s a good rule who have saved Christiania from many speculations and so on. But I can also see it is a weakness because it does not have very much social security in it. Because when you are weak, then your property right is threatened because you can’t use it so much anymore.

If it’s a kind of common place like the children’s house, of course, it’s reasonable that if somebody tries to be in man in charge of it, but don’t use it, then the common community can come and take it over and say, we have to give it to someone else. You don’t use it. But also **the more it comes close to your fundamental needs as your house it can make you feel unsafe.**”

The common ownership shapes how citizens feel about their homes and this physical relationship with place reinforces the feeling of the community. Richard writes, **“Our identity has a great do with participating in the caretaking of our living areas and the collective responsibility for this.”** Christiania is a

unique place on earth and the identity that comes from being part of it is a place-based collective identity and feeling of belonging.

The original charter of Christiania acknowledged the tension inherent in the “freetown” of self-expression within community. The Christiania building office (BK) started early on as a way to take care of collective needs in the community such as collecting trash. Asterix who has lived in Christiania since its inception, says he feels a lot of freedom in Christiania but brings up tensions in the community around organizing to different capacities. On one hand he says “We have this way of consensus so that we decide things, you know, everybody has as a possibilities to make influence. And everybody can be heard. That’s very important.” But on the other hand,

“Also some people really want to have their own freedom to do things, you know, this strong force, many people they don’t go to the meetings and “fuck the meetings like that” and things... in the beginning Christiania was just a place where people move into, you know, we’re not supposed to be some ruling small government... I mean, when you’re a thousand people, you need to be organized... Society is good for something. But very often society gets too much. Also, it binds people. Holds them into systems and people get claustrophobic and cannot deal with it.”

There is a multi-scalar organization of Christiania that steps up control from the individual to community as a whole. Richard explains how maintenance is carried out in Mælkebøtten. “If there are repairs to be made, we can put the question on the agenda for the next area meeting where it will be discussed, and a decision made regarding the carrying out of

FIGURE 3-39: HOUSING COMMONS



Self-built houses along moat



Garden for local residents and guests only



Urban bee keeping



“The Omelette” play lawn at Maelkebotten with remediated soils.

the job. If it requires more professional assistance, the decision is then sent to the office which has to do with the carrying out of the job.” If they are only small changes near ones house that don’t require money, such as building a raised bed, Anders says he just talks to neighbors about it individually without bringing it to the meeting. There are also work parties in autumn and spring that are a very strong tradition in Christiania similar to other types of communities throughout Denmark. (Anders)

BK takes care of garbage, roads, electricity and helps people send in drawings for permits and make applications for loans. They have an in-house architect who draws houses for people. He works with individuals but also puts his own sensibility into it and Githa Caraa, who works in BK thinks it’s a shame the houses lose individuality. (Personal interview December 11, 2018) Githa says BK initiates building projects for historic buildings that require up-keep according to agreements with the Danish state; citizens typically initiate improvement projects for their house unless they need a nudge to keep up with it.

Questions about who has the right to live in Christiania and once they are there, what their right is to keep others out come to light in conflict situations. Jes, who runs the Christiania jazz club, told a story demonstrating how people can control user’s rights. (Personal interview December 11)

“All these people we’re talking about, when they moved out, they had to move because of some kind of gang-related thing. So when they moved out of that house ... they burned the house down, set the house on fire when they left. And it was a nice house. They had said before they weren’t leaving the nice house they built

behind.”

Avoiding buying and selling private property seems to work better when everybody believes they are contributing to the greater good. Asterix built a house in Christiania and lived in it for “some years” before leaving the community for ten years. When he came back, it took him three years to find a new house in Christiania. Since Asterix ascribes to the rules of Christiania, this is not a problem for him and he was able to find a new house eventually.

### **Christiania as Cultural Commons**

A cultural commons goes beyond just the commoning entailed in living together in Christiania to what creates the spirit of the community and makes it significant to Danish society. These things are all created by and for the citizens of Christiania and bridge this significance to people who live outside the community. Christiania’s resources are cultural with collectively owned shops and restaurants, venues for music, visual art, festivals, gatherings, and niche activities such as horseback riding, bird watching, and LGBTQ organizing.

The strong sense of community in Christiania starts with the residents themselves.

“There is a place in front of the *Indkøberen*, which is a small shop selling daily necessities and which was the first shop in Christiania, which, in Danish is called a *gadekær* and is a central place in a living area. Here it is possible to meet people, find out about them, talk about the local gossip, and generally greet your neighbors. It is mostly used by people who live here and

not really recognized or used by visitors. This is a very Danish tradition that goes a very long way back in time and which exists in most small villages and towns which have existed for very many years.” (Richard)

This place is pointed out on every public tour I attended and by every interviewee I talked to. Before Christmas, a lighted-up tent was set up in front of the shop, a clear gesture of the importance of this space even in the dark winter months.

Anders explains the tension of collective ownership between residents and outsiders that results in a conservative force of users’ right and might limit the desire to share the community.

“And it also have another impact it is that when you have this user’s right, you can as long as you’re in charge of a place and you use it but maybe just a little. Enough not to be thrown out by the community, but so little that there’s still space for many other activities. Then you are **afraid of inviting somebody in because if they start to use it more than you, they will take over the user’s right.** Yeah, but if you own the place you wouldn’t be afraid of inviting people in because you could just fire them afterward. Yeah, so it’s also in many ways a conservative factor in Christiania.”

With the thousands of tourists who come to Christiania every day I heard many residents complain about people’s lack of respect for their homes. This presumed right to space demonstrated by tourists pushes residents to protect their homes even more.

There are other mechanisms that enable boundary

crossing inside and outside Christiania. A worker at the collectively-owned restaurant Grøensagen (the Vegetable) told to me that he loved working there and being part of the community but wouldn’t want to live in Christiania. One night I accidentally walked in accidentally after it had closed, and was invited to have a free meal and even sit with the workers hanging out after hours. This was a casual way that I felt the warmth of the Christiania community. The music venue Operean (the Opera) was another place I experienced the crossing over of local Christinites and outsiders. Many more crossing-over places exist such as the skate park Wonderland built by the skating community and featuring artwork by an internationally renowned artist. (Anders tour) The day care facilities are available to both children living in Christiania and the outside so that the children can play with their friends after school. (Anders tour)

Christiania is constantly negotiating the competing interests of residents and outsiders. Anders tells me the bar Månefiskeren (the Moon Fisher) does not serve alcohol because the area residents did not like the associated noise. In this case, the housing commons takes precedence over the cultural commons provided by the bar.

## Christiania as Urban Commons

Christiania is a part of the city of Copenhagen. Anders comments on how it would be very different if Christiania had been an island. There was simultaneously to Christiania’s founding several hippie communes formed in rural Denmark. However Christiania is not a commune, it is a squatted section of

the city that has some ideas and practices in common with hippie communes.

One of the anthems of Christiania, written by the International Gypsy Company in 1976, sung during marches and rallies while fighting for the survival of the community goes “you cannot kill us, because we are part of you.” (Lauritsen, 22) Anders and others describe ways Christiania has had an important impact on the City at large through the arts scene, through bicycle culture and drug sales, as the main areas of influence. Through those arenas of interaction and others, Christiania is also influenced by the city. It is a nightlife destination, an employment center, a place to spend time, and notably, the third most popular tourist destination in the city.

In his TED Talk, Christianite Risenga Manghezli describes what it was like closing Christiania to the public while they decided whether or not to buy the property in 2010. He realized during that time that the point of Christiania was to share it, not just to have it for the residents’ selves. “You can’t own this place; it belongs to everyone... The purpose of this place is not for us, the inhabitants, to be free, but to share that freedom with everyone.” Christiania is lived in, used by and valued by many people in Copenhagen, which adds to its strength, its diversity, and its importance. These uses make Christiania what it is: a lively mixed-use downtown with an active arts and music scene, a bustling hash market on one of the main downtown streets, and a valued urban green space and bird refuge.

The physical resources of Christiania must be managed

to accommodate the thousands of tourists it sees every day. This is done with an active tour guiding business, signage, and amenities. Richard tells that his housing area intentionally grows the hedges on either side of their entry path to obscure the entrance and even so tourists wander in to their private area. However, more work needs to be done to manage tourists. A woman who lives inside the historic red gate at the entry of Maelkebotten tells me that if her door is even slightly ajar people let themselves inside her home. Christiania as a public space is not without its conflicts and the lack of organized planning has contributed to these conflicts.

Christiania is part of many networks and partnerships that add to its relevance and internal sense of purpose. The Researcher in Residence program that I participated in provides a subsidized place to stay for up to a month to help build knowledge about Christiania. The Banana house was built by German carpenters who maintain the traditional practice of travelling from place to place practicing their craft. They use the Banana house as a home base in the area in exchange for carpentry work. Christiania plays host to events, festivals, artists and part of a network of intentional communities. To the extent that the urban commons is about networks that create opportunities for commoning and mutually beneficial resource creation, Christiania enables strong and long-lasting networks.

## **Conclusion**

Christiania proves that people can feel strong legal psychological ownership over a collective home. This sense of

FIGURE 3-40: CULTURAL COMMONS



Tent in front of general store honors its importance as community ritual space



Horse stable and riding school for Christianites and others



Christiania's building office, with their own scaffolding with sign "we build green"



Local art on building

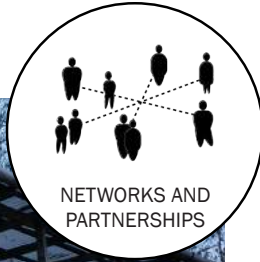
ownership and community control translate into and reinforced by collective management and maintenance over time as well as individual contributions to the physical environment. Art and unique home-made designs are everywhere in Christiania such as extensive murals and unexpected finds like mosaiced out house on a walking trail. The importance of maintenance is a apparent partly because many things were built with wood by novices and over the years have disappeared such as a carved wooden bench in the shape of a swan given to Christiania by the Danish commune Svanholm which was replaced by a plain one. (Anders)

Christiania as a whole has a strong boundary. The residents retained the fences and walls enclosing the former military area and all entrances can be controlled. The borders of Christiania have been closed at moments of conflict, such as when the main entrance was closed to control the location of drug sales. (Anders) The boundary around the entire community reflects the unity of Christiania as a housing commons. On the other hand, territories between public areas, semi-private, and private areas are not as well delineated. This is probably because Christiania was adapted into a residential community, had very little professional planning, and was designed before thousands of tourists came every day. The importance of Oscar Newman's 1971 concept of defensible space becomes apparent when people's personal space is being intruded upon. Christiania demonstrates that as a public space a community can be welcoming to all people, and as a housing commons it is open to all types of people, but in their everyday home lives, people still

want privacy.

Christiania also exemplifies the ways a housing commons can be a cultural resource and significant contributor to the urban commons. Downtown Christiania is controlled by its residents while also a bustling mixed-use entertainment district. The common resources of Christiania, the venues, green areas, and downtown, are places that invite the greater community in, sometimes along the lines of specific networks and partnerships. The inclusive feeling of the urban area and events has generated positive public opinion about the community that has helped Christiania survive. It has also helped integrate new members over time, many of whom get to know residents by working in businesses inside the community.

FIGURE 3-41: URBAN COMMONS



# Othello Square

## Introduction

Othello Square will be a mixed-use community-owned development in Southeast Seattle. At time of writing in Spring 2019 the first buildings are planned to break ground in Summer 2019 and the other buildings are in design development. Curbed, “a plan for mitigating displacement in Othello and Rainier Beach” published by HomeSight and partner organizations, lays out community-led projects includes Othello Square and the co-located Multicultural Community Center. Curbed describes Othello Square as a “community-owned development in Rainier Valley which will specifically address the community’s needs” such as “health, housing, economic opportunity, community connection and displacement.” (Curbed, 56 and 5) Othello Square will be comprised of four buildings on two blocks and partner organizations including Rainier Leadership Academy charter high school, Odessa Brown Children’s Clinic, Sound Childcare Solutions, the HomeSight Opportunity Center, and Multicultural Community Center as well as 360 affordable rental units and the 68-unit limited-equity cooperative homeownership building. (Othello Square Master Plan)

Othello Square is a project embedded in a larger project of equitable development in Southeast Seattle and will house the Multicultural Community Coalition (MCC) Center as a centerpiece of the campus. The MCC “is comprised of 10 immigrant, refugee, and people of color-led organizations

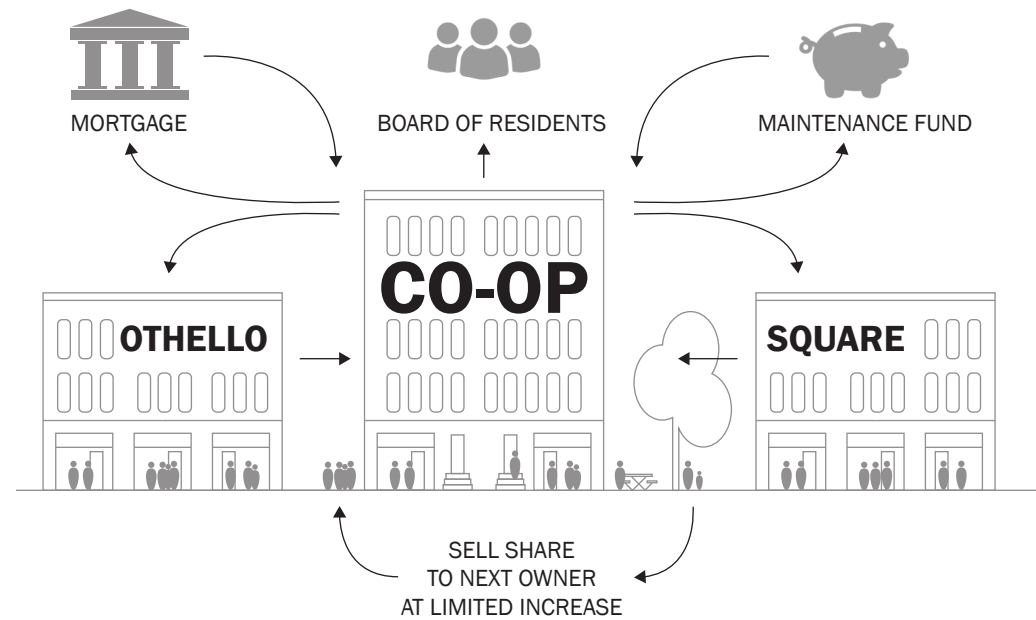


Figure 3-42: Othello Square functional diagram

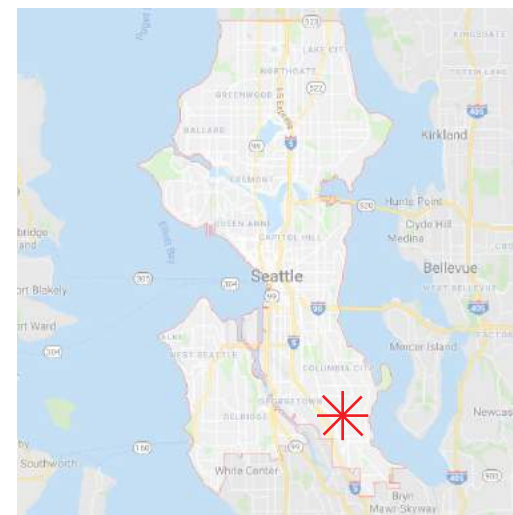


Figure 3-43: Othello Square location map. (Google Maps)



Figure 3-44: Schematic design of Othello Square (Othello Square Master Plan)

providing vital services to historically marginalized communities.” The MCC will provide a co-owned office and community center for these organizations. The MCC is conceived of as an anti-displacement strategy designed to secure a home for the member organizations so they can continue to serve their constituents. “Together, MCC has a reach that spans over 10,000 people whose lives are disproportionately affected by homelessness, displacement, racism and discrimination, poor access to health care and other critical quality of life issues.” Thus, the MCC simultaneously addresses economic displacement and racial discrimination. (Curbed, 61-63)

Community ownership is central to both Othello Square and the MCC. Tony To, project director of Othello Square, is quoted in the Othello Square Master Plan,

“If this community doesn’t own something, we’re going to get pushed out. We have to own real estate. We have to own our own assets. We have to own our own programming. And this is not something that is easy to do. This is, frankly, not something necessarily Seattle is used to, which is marginalized people controlling their own destiny.”

In this statement, To explicitly makes the connection between racial and cultural marginalization, ownership, and self-determination.

Othello Square will embody several different types of commons: the limited-equity co-op is a housing commons, the whole Othello Square campus is a larger scale I call a community commons, and it fits into a larger urban commons of Southeast Seattle and the Seattle metropolitan region. Throughout these

various scales of commons, it can also be expected to support the many cultural commons of Othello neighborhood and an opportunity for transcultural placemaking.

## **Origin Story**

Southeast Seattle has been systemically disinvested for decades. It was marked “definitely declining” on redlining maps. (Curbed, 3) When Sound Transit brought Link Light Rail through the area the community’s request to avoid having tracks at street level were disregarded. (Sean Smith) Though Seattle Housing Authority re-developed NewHolly in 2006 they left the large parcels at the corner of MLK and Othello vacant for decades. (Rachael Meyer) A for-profit development deal for the site fell through and the parcels continue to lie empty. (Daphne Schneider)

Meanwhile, the City of Seattle initiated neighborhood planning in advance of Link Light Rail for Southeast Seattle neighborhoods from 2008 to 2011. Four coalitions of organizations in Southeast Seattle, Rainier Beach Action Coalition, On Board Othello, Multi-cultural Community Center and South Communities Organizing for Racial/Regional Equity (SouthCORE) (Curbed, 8) won a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant called Community Cornerstones to further the priorities identified in the neighborhood plans planning effort (City of Seattle Office of Housing, 3). Community Cornerstones plans set intentions for both Othello Square (equitable transit-oriented development loan program) and the MCC (capacity building to plan for a



Figure 3-45: Othello Square in neighborhood context. Scales of commons as dotted outlines.

'BACKYARD' COURTYARD

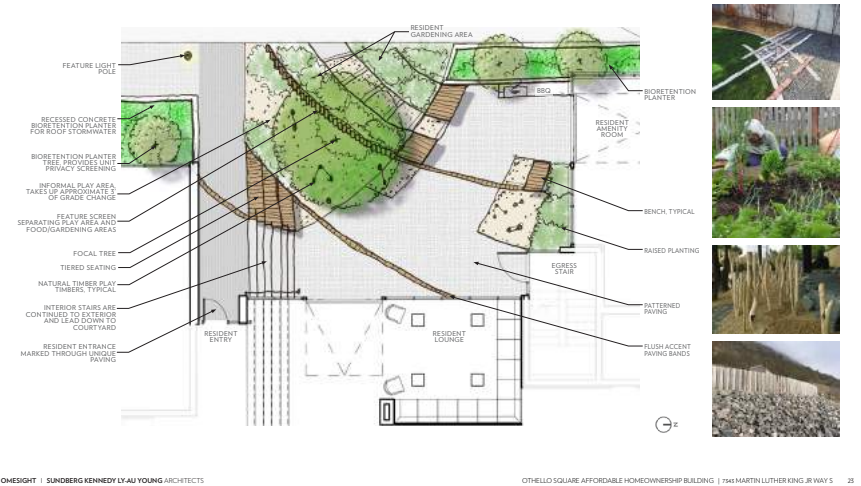


Figure 3-46: Detail plan: Site features in Homeownership Cooperative courtyard. (Weber Thompson in Design Review Board Package by SKL Architects, December 2018)

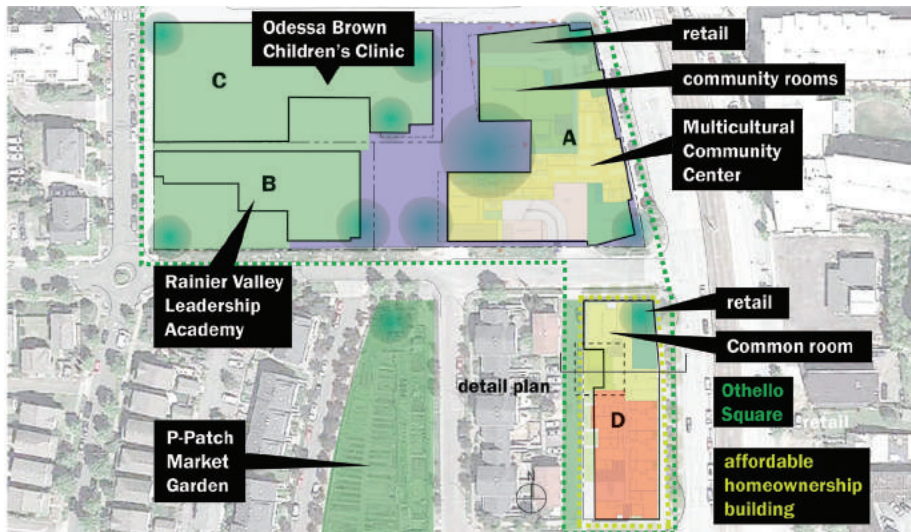


Figure 3-47: Othello Square scales of commons diagram

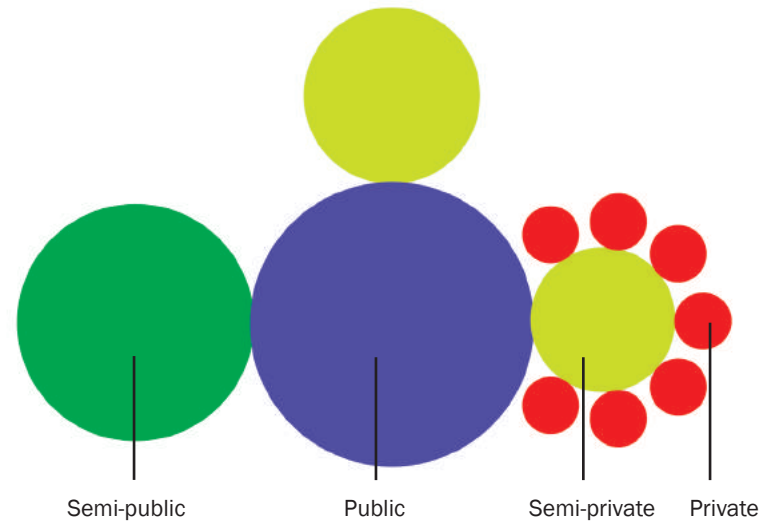


Figure 3-48: Conceptual diagram of scales of commons at Othello Square

shared multicultural center) as integrated strategies to meet community-identified goals. (City of Seattle Office of Housing, 3) A 2014 SkillUp Washington report, “Case for Creating the SE Seattle Economic Opportunity Center” also funded by Community Cornerstones, developed an idea consistent with local plans and supported by interviewed community leaders. The report envisioned the SEOC as “a one-stop location for residents to get an education, get a job, or develop a business is needed and desired in SE Seattle.” (SkillUp, 5) While these are economic objectives, the idea is also fundamentally about cultural inclusion. In the introduction, the report states “first and foremost, the Center would ensure that all program staff are culturally competent, that major languages of the area are fully accommodated, and that services are tailored to the area’s needs.” (4)

However, after the end of Community Cornerstones funding in 2014, the plans did not get implemented by the City. (Curbed, 8) The coalition of organizations got funding through a Communities of Opportunities grant in 2015 funded by Public Health Seattle-King County and The Seattle Foundation. In 2017 HomeSight led the development of the Curbed plan which included its own robust community engagement effort. (Curbed, 9) HomeSight took on leadership for the development of the SEOC, which was renamed Othello Square. (HomeSight.org)

As an existing organization with staff and capacity, HomeSight has taken on a convening role of the On Board Othello Coalition, the Multicultural Community Center, the Curbed report, and other community development efforts.

(HomeSight.org) This is why Tony To, director emeritus of HomeSight said in an interview “we are part of the community and the community is part of us.” HomeSight was also well-positioned to take on the work of developing Othello Square, as in addition to community development, its main line of work is homebuyer assistance lending and affordable real estate development. (HomeSight.org) HomeSight has organized many partners from small neighborhood and culturally based groups to county and state government. (Othello Square Master Plan) Three standing Othello Square meetings are held each month, On Board Othello, the governance committee consisting of owners of the future buildings, and the more practical Othello Square workgroup. (Rachael Meyer) Partners in the process, including the design team has received racial equity training in an ongoing commitment to equity even as the project becomes professionalized in its implementation. (Rachael Meyer) The overlap and focus of this approach results in high level of productivity and collaboration apparent in my observations. The priorities and goals for Othello Square are grounded in long-standing community planning, and community involvement is continuing throughout the project implementation process at the time of writing.

### **Limited-Equity Cooperative as Housing Commons**

Othello Square development will include the first purpose-built limited-equity housing cooperative in Washington State, called the affordable homeownership building or Building D. The future residents of the building’s 68 units will be the



Figure 3-49: Illustrative section perspective through courtyard and entry by SKL Architects (Sundberg Kennedy Ly-Au Young Architects Building D Design Review Board Package, December 2018)

exclusive share-holders and lease-holders of the cooperative. HomeSight will not hold any shares but will be one of the lenders for the cooperative share loans. Being a limited-equity cooperative (LEC) means that there is a ceiling on the price increase of the co-op shares so that there is some accumulated equity for the shareholders when they decide to sell and also an affordable share for the next owners to buy. (HomeSight presentation) The cooperative offers stabilized housing costs, stability of tenure, and social benefits, and allows for a continued cycle of affordability at generational turn-over.

At the time of writing, HomeSight is developing the bylaws, governance structure, and rules of the cooperative. HomeSight leaders are incorporating lessons from New York City cooperatives they visited on a study tour. Important aspects of the cooperative structure, shared by Tony To in an interview, are to have term limits for co-op leadership, to share responsibilities and duties, and have a stewardship role for HomeSight to continue to work with residents for at least 10 to 15 years. HomeSight's stewardship role will be required and budgeted into the operation costs of the building. HomeSight will make sure the board meets regularly, keeps records and is transparent about finances. Co-op owners will be required to go through homebuyer education and counseling. The stewardship role is meant to help new homeowners learn how to run their building, being an unfamiliar model in Washington State but it is also meant to appease public funding sources at the city, county and state levels that are subsidizing the project. (Tony To)

Recruitment for cooperative members has been by word

of mouth, through the HomeSight homeownership center, their mailing lists and newsletter, and through partner organizations such as Seattle Housing Authority's NewHolly and the local business organizations (Tony To). Starting in summer 2019 HomeSight is holding monthly meetings introduce potential co-op owners to the concept and for financial officers to work with them individually (Uche Okezie).

Sundberg, Kennedy, Ly-Au Young (SKL) Architects and Weber Thompson landscape architects have been active in the engagement process. Early on HomeSight conducted focus groups with prospective co-op members including solicitation of design input. (Homesight.org and To) The design of the building reflects the input of prospective members such as having places to grow food, having space where children can play under supervision, and having secure, big balconies. (Othello Square Affordable Homeownership Building Early Design Guidance Package, 36) A thirty person turn-out to its final design review board meeting with only support attests to the level of involvement of many partners throughout the design process. (Daphne Schneider)

The design team worked to make the most of the resources available as exemplified with the optimization of spaces around the courtyard to make the most of the small space allowed for it to fit in enough and large enough dwelling units. The design includes shared sun decks on every-other floor overlooking the pocket courtyard as well as an open air stair sharing the same space as the courtyard. To additionally maximize the space, the resident common room and lounge on

FIGURE 3-50: HOUSING COMMONS



Affordable Homeownership Building meeting Nov. 2018 (SEOC Facebook)



# HomeSight

Come back later for new meeting dates!

Notes from past HomeSight limited-equity co-op homeownership information sessions and focus groups:

Co-Operative Focus Group and Architects Preliminary Design Discussion (February 24, 2018) - **Presentation** - **Neighborhood Diagram** (from SKL Architects)

Co-Operative Focus Group and Homeownership Presentation (February 2, 2018) - **Presentation**

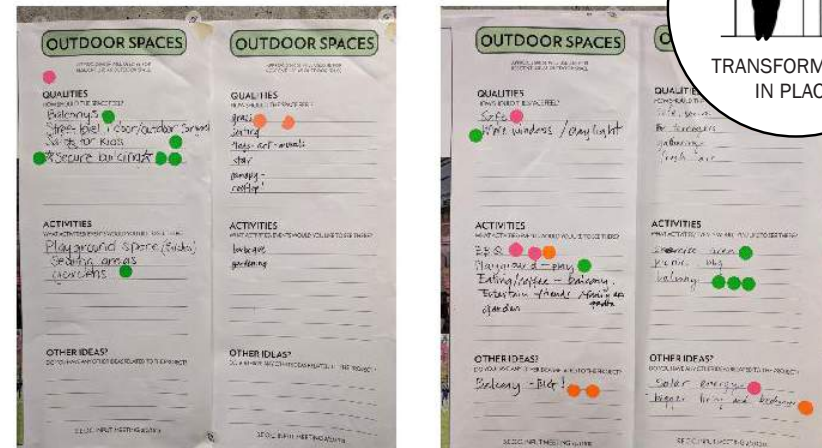
Introduction to Co-Operatives Information Session #2 (January 13, 2018) - **Presentation**

Introduction to Co-Operatives Information Session #1 (December 8, 2017) - **Presentation**

List of co-op engagement efforts (HomeSight.org)



Affordable Homeownership Building workshop (SKL Architects)



Posters from community meeting Feb. 2018 (Building D Early Design Guidance Package)

the first floor have garage doors that can be opened to make it all one continuous community space and the adjacent alley is available to spill out into. Though a small space, the courtyard features resident gardening areas, natural play features and a BBQ. (Othello Square Affordable Homeownership Building, 23)

Analysis of the affordable homeownership building design in relation to the findings explained in the following chapter finds it mostly a design supportive of community ownership with a few potential challenges. The common spaces including the courtyard, common room and lounge exemplify a flexible variety of gathering spaces that can be used for events and everyday life. The adjacency of the lounge and courtyard to the main entrance, and the convenience of the courtyard and alley for neighborhood circulation will likely make these spaces where residents often run into one another while they are hanging out. The courtyard design, having space for gardening, placement of a grill, and planting areas leaves some space for resident modification, but is relatively fixed with built-in seat-steps and poured concrete. As a high-traffic area, it will be durable, but not the easiest to modify as needs change over time. Big balconies on every floor rather than every-other would be a more intuitive way to share space and more appropriate for the building with 14 units per floor. Only time will tell how residents use the space, and a post-occupancy evaluation would be a valuable investment, as this is the few purpose-built limited-equity co-ops in the country.

### **Othello Square as Community Commons**

Tony To confirms that Othello Square as a whole is a

larger-scale form of community ownership. To explains that Othello Square is community-owned by nature of it being 70% owned by nonprofits based in Southeast Seattle and the cooperative, the mission and goals being determined by the community, and also because HomeSight, the lead organizer, is of the community.

The idea of Othello Square being community-owned is also what makes it address issues of racial equity on the campus scale. Everyone need access to education, networking, physical space to hold events, but because of racial inequity, many people of color, immigrants and refugees don't feel safe in institutionalized settings. This development, by being community-owned, is a safer space where community organizations are the front door.

This welcoming and safe atmosphere will be signaled by the art and design of the plaza as well as the programming, retail, and the people who are there. (To) The Othello Square Master Plan lays out six guiding principles for the design that focus on making it welcoming and representing the cultures of people in the neighborhood:

“(1) Reflect the history and traditions of the Othello Neighborhood as a place that has always been welcoming to all people; (2) Create an iconic campus; (3) Consider the design values and traditions of the current cultural communities; (4) Provide opportunities at the site, particularly through art, to reflect the current and diverse ethnic groups that make up the community, the current users of the site, and those in the future; (5) Allow for flexibility over time; (6) Create a space at the ground plane to connect Othello Square as a whole.” (8)

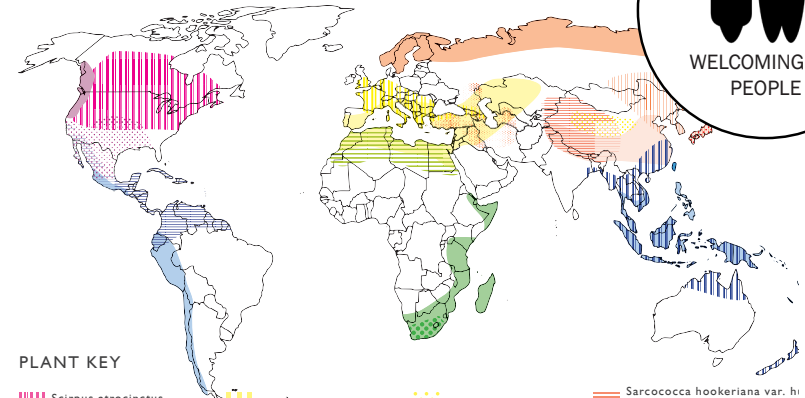
FIGURE 3-51: COMMUNITY COMMONS



Rendering of Odessa Brown Clinic building with large placeholder artwork on facade. (Weber Thompson Building C Design Review Board Package)



ETHNOBOTANICAL GEOGRAPHICAL RANGE



PLANT KEY

Scirpus atrocinctus Rhus aromatica	Cornus sanguinea	Cotoneaster dammeri	Sarcococca hookeriana var. hi Perovskia atriplicifolia Ursinia anthemoides
Mahonia aquifolium Mertensia ciliata Valeriana officinalis Ledum glandulosum	Galium odoratum Rosmarinus officinalis	Nandina domestica Rhapiolepis umbellata Dioscorea batatas	Kerria japonica Skimmia japonica Fatsia japonica Akebia quinata
Carex pachystachya	Lithodora diffusa	Cyrtomium falcatum Tricyrtis hirta Hosta rupifraga	Rubus calycinoides



Ethnobotanical planting palette, Weber Thompson (Building C Design Review Board Package)

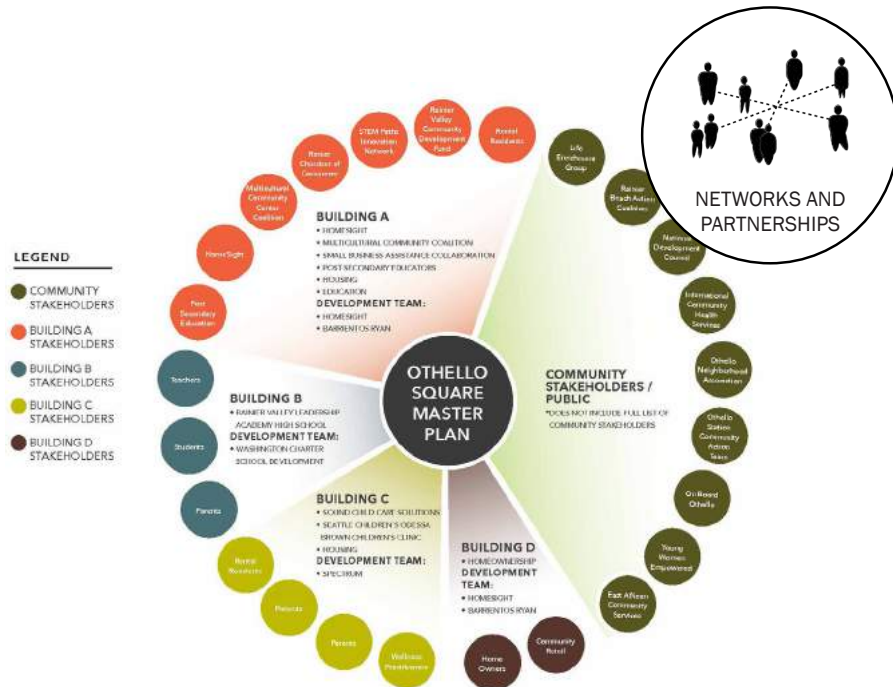
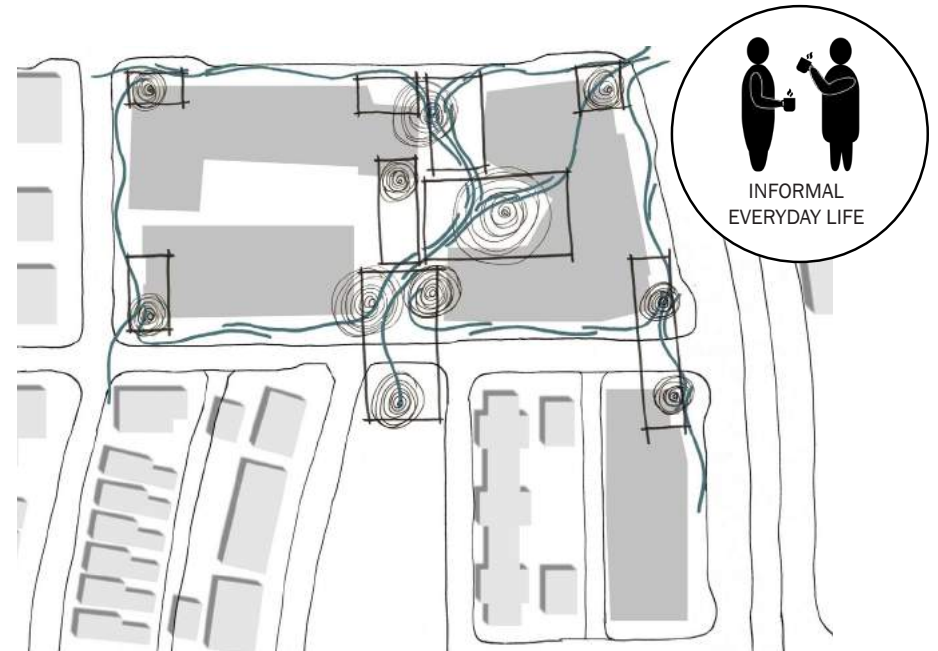
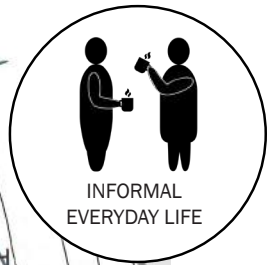


Diagram of partners from Othello Square Master Plan



Diagrammatic site plan from Othello Square Master Plan shows connection between Link Light Rail and NewHolly and also small nodes forming space.



The goals in the Othello Square master plan informed the design toolkit recommendation to imprint the material cultures of community members. The Othello Square goals do this in four different ways, expressing the idea of being welcoming, creating new distinctive architecture, considering traditions belonging to cultural groups, and providing opportunities for existing diverse community members to imprint themselves on the site through art. This multi-pronged approach recognizes the complexity of the multiculturalism of Southeast Seattle which cannot be summed up with only one goal.

The master plan guiding principles are translating into design direction in the building narrative for the Opportunity Center, “Architectural elements will express vibrancy, energy, strength, timelessness and multicultural richness using color, materials, patterns, and elements that express a sense of uplift, opportunity and empowerment.” (Opportunity Center Arrangement Studies, 2018) Building C explicitly expresses the theme of uplift in its architectural composition in which the rising elements will be art completed by a local artist via a local arts curator and the arts workgroup. Building C will also have an exterior wall clad with tiles personalized by community members and a plant palette that draws from ecosystems around the world from where Othello Square neighbors hail.

The Opportunity Center building narrative goes on to describe how the campus design will reinforce the concept of being welcoming and accessible. “The building will have strong indoor-outdoor connections, visually or physically connecting the building’s uses with other programs throughout the campus

and into the neighborhood, and reinforcing the accessibility of the building services to the neighborhood.” The collaborate process of project design, including the role of integration manager, is helping coordinate opportunities afforded by making connections between parts of the project which will add to its value on a budget.

Designing for specific community needs is not without its challenges. One of the core objectives of the MCC is to have a large gathering space for celebrations such as weddings which often have as many as 1,000 guests in the Eritrean community. Yordanos Teferi, one of the leaders of the MCC described how the MCC compromised for an event space for only 400 guests but during the design process realized that the architects had not accounted space for a stage or dance floor, which weddings need. The ability of Teferi and others who have the cultural knowledge to be at design meetings allowed for consideration of specific community needs that will make the resulting place really able to meet the needs of the communities that own it.

## **Othello Square and Urban Commons**

The importance of community ownership and affordable housing in the Othello neighborhood is premised on the neighborhood being a valuable urban commons. Tony To tells that the main take-away from focus groups was people want to stay in Seattle, and Othello is an attractive location for the transit (access to jobs), open space, retail, and programming. It is also already home to many people who are at risk of displacement. The underlying goal of the entire project is to own property and

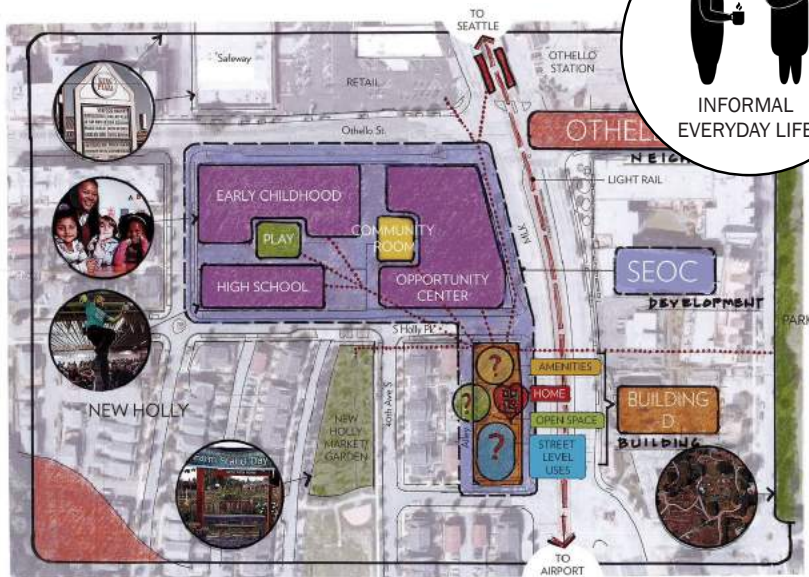
FIGURE 3-52: URBAN COMMONS



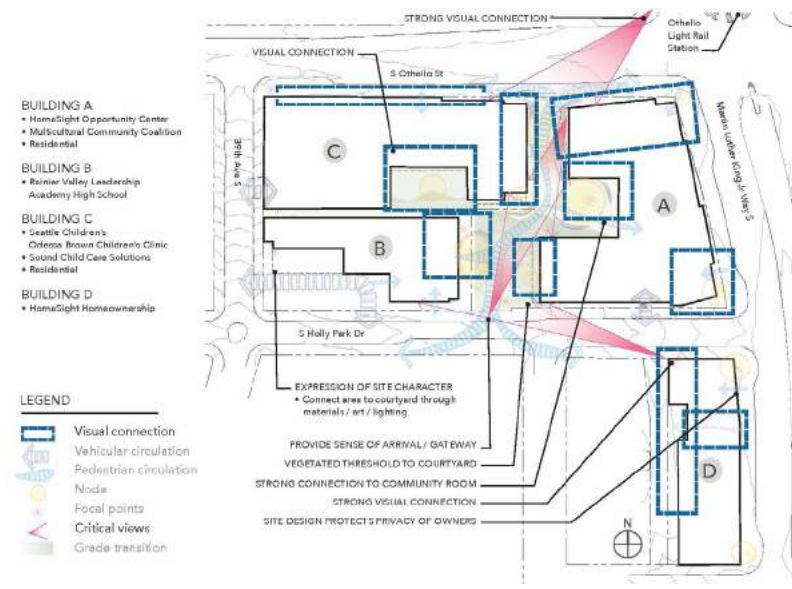
Community residents participating in the planning of a Southeast Seattle multi-cultural center, November 2012 workshop at the Filipino Community Center. (Community Cornerstones, 7)



New Holly Market Garden farm stand (Seattle.gov)



Neighborhood diagram for workshop (SKL Architects in Building D Design Early Design Guidance Package)



Othello Square Master Plan conceptual plaza design

build affordable housing so people can continue to live in the neighborhood.

Ethnic diversity is an asset of the Othello neighborhood. Often mentioned when introducing Southeast Seattle, the 98118 zip code, in which Othello and Rainier beach are located “represents an array of people of color, immigrant, and refugee communities with 40 distinct ethnic groups.” (Curbed, 3) The Curbed report notes their survey found people are most proud of “diversity, people and community” and at their community open house the biggest concern was losing multi-cultural community. (61) This multi-cultural community was formed by decades of racially discriminatory policies and so it is especially important from the perspective of racial equity for these communities not to be displaced. The local networks of organizations, businesses, communities and activities can be seen as the urban commons of the Othello neighborhood.

Othello Square is engaging with the urban commons by growing out of neighborhood planning and building extensive partnerships. Othello Square will enhance the urban commons that already exists in Othello by providing a permanent home for people and community-based organizations, adding a center to the neighborhood that will connect disparate groups and places, and reflecting cultures of the neighborhood in art, design, and programming. By meaningfully engaging in the urban commons of the Othello neighborhood, Othello Square is able to not only help people stay in place but provide an opportunity for people to work together, and as Tony To calls it “advance themselves.” Community ownership enables local people and organizations to

lead positive change and leverage local assets and institutional ones without giving up power.

Site planning and future plaza design shown in the Othello Square Master Plan make physical connections between neighborhood groups and places while also creating a new neighborhood center. The NewHolly Market Garden is one of a few programs in the city where gardeners set up a farm stand during the summer months and directly sell their fresh produce. The schematic plaza design in the Othello Square Master Plan carries the grove of trees across the street, with a more vegetated neighborhood feel at the south end of the plaza. The north end of the plaza on the other hand will have a more urban feel with retail connecting to the existing Othello retail core close to the Link Light Rail station. The layout of the plaza in-between the buildings satisfies the need for a safe pedestrian space in the neighborhood away from the busy streets, and traces the existing common path of people walking from the Light Rail to NewHolly neighborhood. (Rachael Meyer)

Since the Othello Square project has been underway, its future site has been activated in ways that engage specific community members and signal that something is happening there to everyone passing by. The Rainier Valley Leadership Academy operated their middle school on the exact location of their future school, in portable buildings for the 2017-2018 school year. Beet Box, also part of On Board Othello, had a community garden on the site summer 2018. An On Board Othello work group was formed in early 2019 to focus on temporary activation of the site. (On Board Othello Participant

Packet) In June 2019, the first annual Fair at Othello Square will be held on the site in coordination with other events throughout neighborhood. These creative ways of utilizing the site in temporary ways informed the design toolkit recommendation for easy interventions.

There are many more ways the Othello Square project has been engaged with the community at large including open community meetings and a significant effort to hire locally for construction work. HomeSight organized a job and subcontractor fair for local hire with opportunities for training in advance of construction. The project has set higher than necessary goals for minority and women owned business subcontractors for construction. Community outreach materials are printed materials in a dozen languages and meetings have several translators. Childcare is provided and more than enough food is provided so that people take some home. In order to maintain long-term commitment of community members necessary in the process, HomeSight staff are helping fundraise for the MCC and some stipend is provided to compensate community members for their time.

## **Conclusion**

Othello Square will operate on at least three scales of commons: housing commons of the affordable homeownership building, the community commons of the community-owned development of Othello Square as a whole, and as a new connector of the urban commons of the Othello neighborhood and beyond. Commons theory is one way to analyze how

people organize themselves to create resources at different scales. Othello Square uses community ownership as a way address racial justice on a fundamental level. By traditionally marginalized communities owning assets they have the power of ownership to create resources according to their own goals. The multi-cultural nature of the community will be reflected in the art and design of the campus, in order to welcome all people who might not otherwise feel welcome. The explicit connections between racial justice and property ownership, and the way the design of the campus reflects those values makes Othello Square a valuable example for future community-owned development.

## **Comparison**

Certain scales of commons are better exemplified in some cases than others. The Nørrebro Co-op demonstrates a strong community commons between the co-ops on the block but not much by way of urban commons. Christiania exemplifies all of the scales, with the housing commons being more assumed or underplayed in comparison to the cultural and urban commons it actively negotiates. Tinggården, being suburban, does not have to contend with fitting into the urban commons in immediate ways but still uses its platform as an intentional community with a unique history to engage in broader issues. Othello Square, being currently under development, is so far only connected in intangible ways to the urban and cultural commons, and how the housing commons will play out remains real life to be seen.

The importance and awareness of the commons and

community ownership varies among the case studies as well. In Christiania, self-governance is the main thing that sets the community apart from the other communities, and simply living in Christiania is an important part of ones' identity. Othello Square in contrast values community ownership in order to accomplish goals like racial equity and anti-displacement, so the language it uses stresses common ownership less. Tinggården tends to be explicitly socialist in its originating documents and its most outspoken residents, which factors into its identity as community-owned.

Overall, these case studies have given me a broad set of knowledge and experience to draw from. Identifying commoning practices that are similar between the case studies provided the basis for developing the set of commoning practices presented in chapter four. The case studies have also provided a way to check the relevance and accuracy of design recommendations.

## Chapter 4

# Toward a Framework of Community-Owned Placemaking

What types of spaces support inclusive, community-owned placemaking? This question can be answered by defining the goals of inclusivity and community-ownership, identifying the ways people achieve these goals through their activities or *commoning practices*, and then identifying design considerations that support these activities.

The goals, encompassing equity and commoning objectives are **lowered thresholds to belonging** and **agency to place-make**. Commoning practices range from the every-day to the institutional, all building bridges and allowing people to feel at home in the city. Supporting these practices are design considerations in three categories, **physically and emotionally connected, supporting community life, and changeable over time**. Together, these principles can help designers align with the processes of community ownership and can help community leaders learn from previous successes as they forge their own way.

## Scope of this framework

Community ownership can be understood through physical space or through legal ownership structures which often get confused. The kinds of housing that are commonly owned and share space fall within the scope of the community-owned placemaking framework I develop in this and the next chapter as depicted in figure 4-1. Housing typologies that share space do not guarantee inclusivity, such as in gated communities. Commonly-owned property models do not always function as social communities, such dispersed community land trusts. As discussed in the literature review, community-owned housing models are collectively owned, stewarded by their residents, and passed on to the next generation without profit, so that they stay affordable while providing most of the benefits of ownership. The case studies I examined in the previous chapter are both legally community-owned and share physical space. They include ownership models such as limited-equity cooperatives, nonprofit associations, and squats. As noted in chapter six, while they are not the target audience of this thesis, the recommendations of this framework may be beneficial to non-community-owned developments as well.

## Commons theory

Community ownership has the potential to create welcoming, accessible, and resilient places by manifesting commons theory. In other words, commons theory explains how

places can be created by community groups. For the purpose of this thesis I define the commons as **inclusive community practices that create noncommodified resources and places benefiting community members and society**. Figure 4-2 illustrates this definition in what I call the ‘cycle of commoning’ in which the three main parts are intrinsically linked.

My definition of the commons borrows the three-part definition of commons (communities, commoning practices, and resources) from Mary Dellenbaugh, in her 2015 book *Urban Commons: Beyond State and Market*. The notion of noncommodified resources is drawn from Marxist geographers including Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Henrik Gutzon Larsen and Anders Lund Hansen as discussed in the chapter two literature review. The importance of inclusion was not a major theme in literature I reviewed, but through conversations with reviewers (particularly landscape architect Audrey West) it became clear that the importance of commoning was meaningless unless it was explicitly non-exclusive.

Figure 4-3 illustrates how the same cycle of commoning can be used to describe both inclusive and exclusive communities. Powerful, wealthy people do often protect their status by making unwelcoming spaces which creates expensive, exclusive resources that do not share social or any other form of capital. This demonstrates the importance of developing open commons that welcome typically marginalized people and leave space for difference, organized in a democratic fashion that results in shared, accessible resources that expand access to capital.



**BLUE RIDGE COMMON INTEREST DEVELOPMENT** (Openlistings.com)



**COHOUSING** Typical American privately-owned (Cohousing.org)



**OTHELLO SQUARE** (Weber Thompson)



**NØRREBRO CO-OP**



**RESIDENT-OWNED COMMUNITY** (Townandcountrykingston.coop)



**DUDLEY STREET COMMUNITY LAND TRUST**, Roxbury, Massachusetts (Jesse Costa/WBUR)



**TINGGÅRDENE NONPROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION**



**CHRISTIANIA**

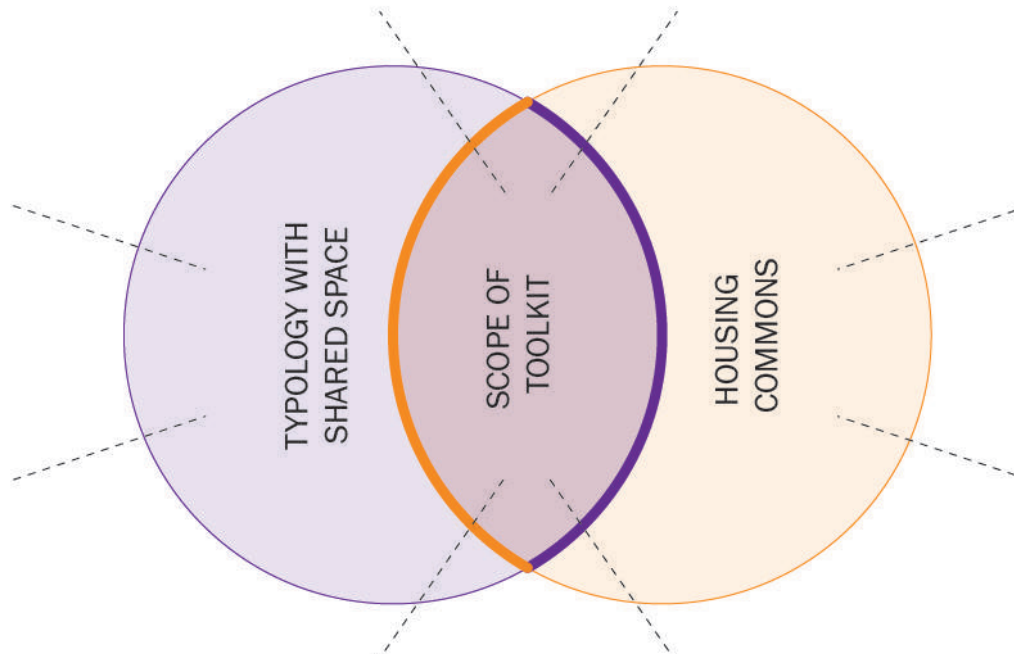


Figure 4-1: Scope of toolkit for community-owned placemaking

## Goals of community ownership

As manifestations of commons, the goal of community ownership models is to organize inclusive commoning practices that create noncommodified resources and places that remain affordable to stable communities. It follows that *access* to a commons is as important as what happens within a commons. From literature review as well as case study analysis and discussions with reviewers, I developed two main equal goals of community ownership diagrammed in figure 4-4: (1) **lowered thresholds to belonging**, addressing access and (2) **agency to place-make** addressing resource creation within commons. Together, these goals strive for an equalizing effect on society, as Maja Hojer Bruun (2011) explains, through equitable incorporation of new members and equalization between members (70). The language used in these goals is intentionally relationship-based to emphasize the human aspect of these concepts, as encouraged by Boting Zhang who shared with me the importance of the words “agency” and “belonging”, a City of Seattle anti-displacement strategist. The additional goal of supporting commoning practices is foundational to the work of community ownership.

### Lowered thresholds to belonging

Because commons do not necessarily provide benefits to those who do not belong to them, in order to benefit society at large it is critical that commons are open, accessible, and welcoming, with lowered thresholds to entry, specifically

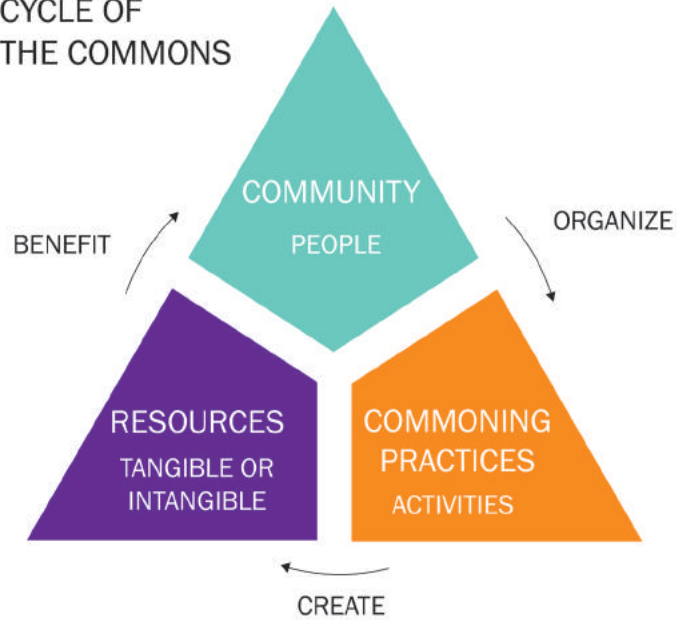
targeting groups that are usually systemically excluded. Inclusion can be thought of as gate-keeping mechanisms welcome some people and not others. The world is full of persistent, real prejudices and discrimination that expose marginalized groups to violence and exclusion in mainstream spaces. Creating safe spaces for marginalized groups, people of color, indigenous people, immigrants, refugees, religious minorities, queer and transgender people, people with disabilities, and others, requires intention and effort. As Jeffrey Hou (2013) quotes “safe spaces are not found, they are created.” (11)

At the scale of the housing commons (a common-pool resource), access to membership will be defined by governance policies’ thresholds such as monetary value and application processes. While a defined group is necessary to govern a common-pool resource, (Ostrom (1990)) the mechanisms controlling these thresholds are critical to determining who is included and should be carefully considered by the housing commons. At the scale of the urban commons, such as a neighborhood community, thresholds to belonging tend to be less formal and informal everyday interactions may be enough to access membership in a group.

### Agency to place-make

Agency to place-make satisfies the human need to shape one’s environment to make a home. Placemaking is part of the bundle of rights encompassed by ownership and called for at an urban scale by the ‘right to the city’ movement. Self-governed communities have the ability to distribute rights of placemaking along nested scales of private-ness so people have agency

### CYCLE OF THE COMMONS



The commons:  
 Inclusive **community practices** that create noncommodified **resources and places** benefitting **members** and society.

Figure 4-2: The cycle of commoning and simplified definition of commons, color-coded.

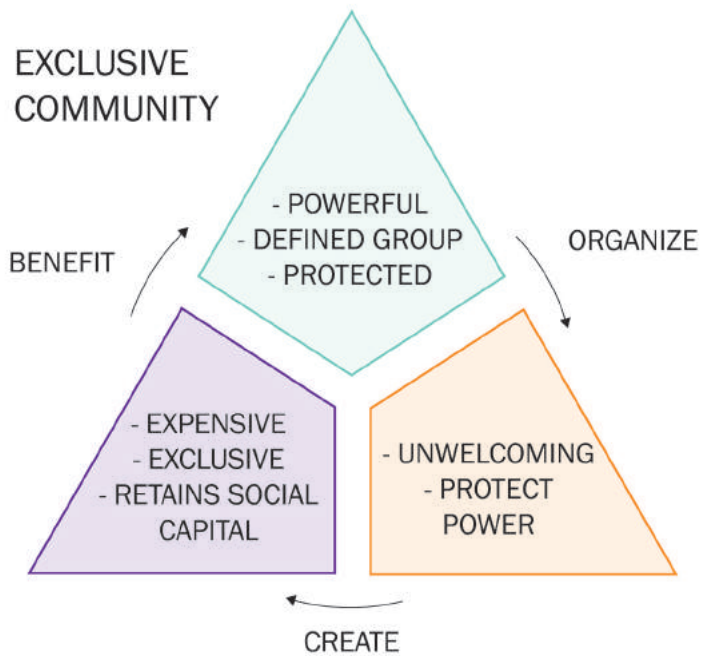


Figure 4-3: Exclusive and inclusive cycles of commoning

they need to personalize their home, but also collectively best meet the needs of the community. Collective place-making in a housing commons has the benefits of resource conservation, building community, and increasing urban livability. A housing commons can share these benefits with the urban commons by improving public space, and can thus use placemaking as a means to lower thresholds to belonging as well.

## Approach

Kevin Lynch in *Good City Form* (1981) encourages using performance characteristics as the foundation for normative theory of design in order to strike a balance between specificity and generality. (108) The commoning practices explained in this chapter that form the basis of my design recommendations can be seen as performance characteristics. The effectiveness of the design toolkit can be judged by the extent they afford commoning practices. Similarly, in his 2017 chapter “Urban Commoning in Cities Divided,” Jeffrey Hou suggests a move from “a focus on shared resources to the production of social relationships” in designers of the commons.

The commoning practices presented here are themes for strategies a community can adopt in pursuit of creating an inclusive, transcultural, urban housing commons. Figure 4-5 summarizes the methodology used to support this claim. It begins with goals of community ownership that can be achieved through commoning practices that can in turn be supported through design. The interactions between these ends and means are multiple and overlapping but also concrete, as can be seen

by tracing the orange dotted lines in figure 4-5. Redundancy in ways to reach goals has the potential to create synergies between projects or resonate with people in different ways.

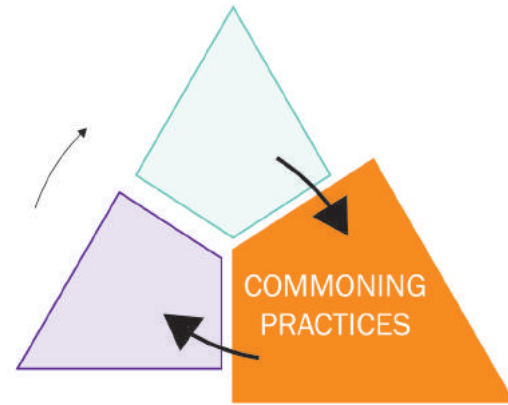
My approach focuses on how designers can support activities, or in the context of commons, commoning practices, as illustrated in figure 4-5. By supporting activities that take place in real space, designers are setting the stage for productive relationships to happen. Design in this way creates an environment that *affords* commoning practices to happen, rather than assuming a certain form will *make* them happen. This is the same concept that Grace Kim arrives at in her 2006 master’s thesis on designing the cohousing common house. Instead of finding the perfect dimensions of a common house, she realized that “considerate study of social patterns and group dynamics” of each community form the criteria successful design. (138) The same is true for community-owned housing. Everyday informal interactions help build community, so figuring out how those happen in the specific community and designing spaces that support them, will be more successful than prescribing a one-size-fits-all design. By employing commoning practices as the basis of design, this thesis both acknowledges the primacy of social interactions over space and offers concrete ways spaces can support those activities.

### Commoning practices and design toolkit

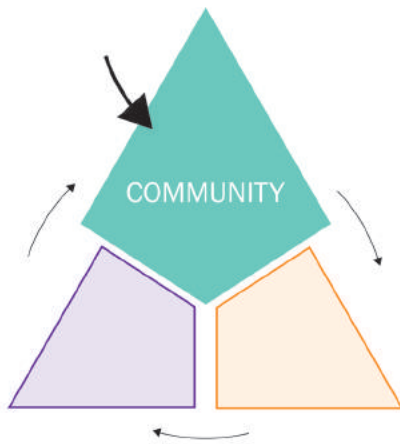
Commoning practices are activities and institutions people participate in together that create resources – tangible resources such as places, and intangible resources such as social capital. I have identified eight themes of commoning practices,



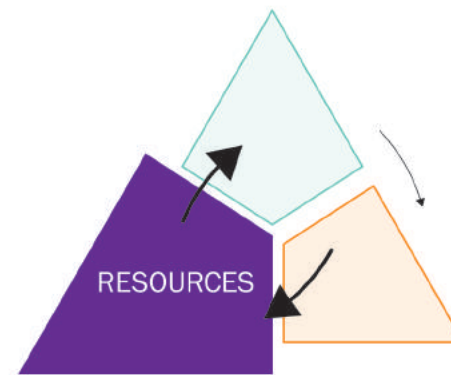
CYCLE OF COMMONING



SUPPORT  
COMMONING PRACTICES



LOWERED THRESHOLDS  
TO BELONGING



AGENCY TO  
PLACE-MAKE

Figure 4-4: Goals of commoning

each described in detail in the following pages, that describe desired aspects of life in an urban housing commons. Each commoning practice has the potential to address either or both of the goals of community ownership, as illustrated by the Venn diagram in figure 4-7.

The design considerations listed in the toolkit were derived by analyzing what design supports each commoning practice in my case studies and reviewed, especially Jeffrey Hou's lessons learned in *Transcultural Cities* (2013), cited simply as "Hou" throughout this chapter. For example, the design of bumping spaces supports informal everyday life, which contributes to peoples' agency to place-make, because people tend to imagine a shared future of their place while spending time together. The design considerations offered in the toolkit are meant to afford or promote opportunities for social practices rather than prescribe them.

Specific commoning practices will be enacted differently in every community. For example, informal everyday life is important to many communities but is practiced in infinite ways. It may take place in public or private depending on the interaction, culture and personal preferences. Design will always need to specifically support the commoning practices of each particular community. Chapter six goes into more depth on an approach for landscape architects and other designers to align their practices with community ownership.

Following this introductory material, this chapter introduces the eight themes of commoning practices, each one represented by an original icon. The key commoning practices identified in this thesis are: (1) networks and partnerships, (2)

transformation in place, (3) welcoming all people, (4) traditions and rituals, (5) informal everyday life, (6) local economy, (7) shared stewardship, and (8) individual personalization. Each of these commoning practices asks the designer to consider how design can provide fertile ground for them to flourish at various lifecycle stages of the development.

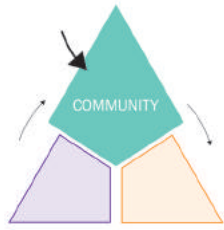
### **Lifecycle approach**

Another layer of information becomes apparent when considering how commoning practices apply to phases throughout the lifecycle of a project as illustrated in figure 4-6. In general, lowering thresholds to belonging happens earlier on in the process and agency to place-make comes later. However, both happen throughout the project and many commoning practices have a dual purpose. While these phases will vary for every real-world project, a rough outline of probable times they will occur is laid out in Figure 4-6. For each commoning practice, I have separately listed how it might specifically apply to different phases of the project lifecycle. Through these generalized lists we can see how various commoning practices take on different meaning from the very conception of a project through to generational turn-over of residents.

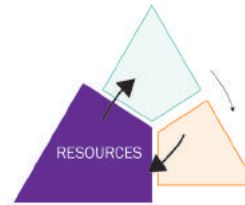
### **Design toolkit**

The next chapter presents the 'design toolkit for community-owned placemaking' with the categories of physically and emotionally connected, supporting community life, and changeable over time that supports these commoning practices.

**GOALS OF COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP**

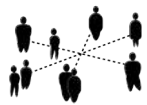


LOWERED THRESHOLDS TO BELONGING



AGENCY TO PLACE-MAKE

**COMMONING PRACTICES**



NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS



WELCOMING ALL PEOPLE



INFORMAL EVERYDAY LIFE



LOCAL ECONOMY



TRADITIONS AND RITUALS



TRANSFORMATION IN PLACE

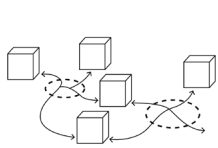


SHARED STEWARDSHIP

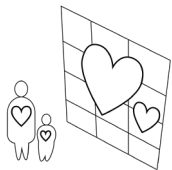


INDIVIDUAL PERSONALIZATION

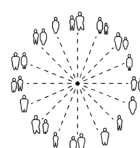
**DESIGN TOOLKIT**



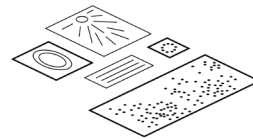
CONNECTED AND NEARBY



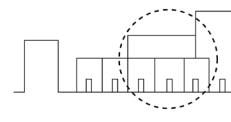
LOVABLE



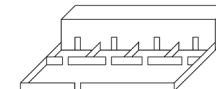
PLACES TO BE



PLACES TO GATHER



ADAPTIVE



MODIFIABLE



FLEXIBLE

**PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY CONNECTED**

**SUPPORTING COMMUNITY LIFE**

**CHANGEABLE OVER TIME**

Figure 4-5: Methodology summary



# Commoning Practices

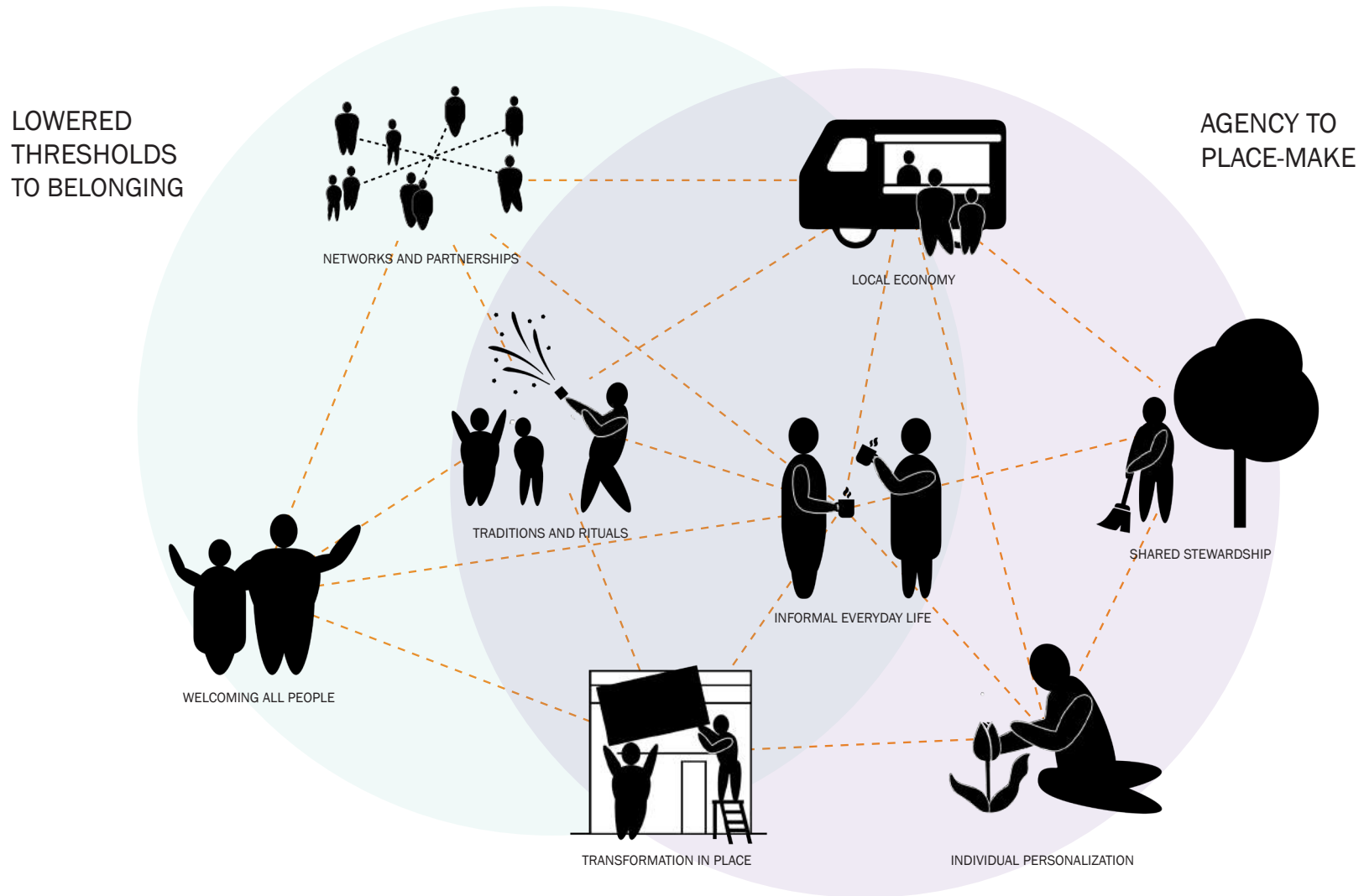


Figure 4-7: Commoning practices in relation to goals of community ownership

# Networks and partnerships

## Importance of networks and partnerships

Networks are relationships between people and organizations that might be loose or fleeting while partnerships are more established connections sharing resources, labor, and knowledge. The formation and maintenance of networks and partnerships between community-owned housing organizations and other organizations and individuals is a key link between communities and commoning practices in a broad sense. Networking and partnership-building implies organizing people and communities in the urban commons at large into resource-sharing housing commons.

In order to not be a closed, exclusive enclave, a housing community must be embedded in a network of, and form partnerships with other types of communities organized along economic, cultural, ethnic, interest, or other lines of community formation.

Networks and partnerships in general lower thresholds to belonging to a commons by providing in-roads for individuals through established channels that include commoning along the way. Commoning in partner organizations might include building familiarity, trust, leadership development, training, etc. that might help ease a transition into community ownership. There is a potential for networks and partnerships to lead to continued homogeneity and privileged classes having access to commons if they only network and partner within those arenas. Networks and

partnerships are an important way for transcultural partnerships and other productive crossovers to take place. Being part of a larger network, benefits are gained through access to people with resources and knowledge

## Relation to other commoning practices

Networks and partnerships form the basis for many commoning practices that are rooted in place and cross typical boundaries. They form the foundation of understanding and maintenance of relevance regarding how to transform in place, to welcome new members, to establish meaningful traditions and rituals already practiced by existing communities, and connect with and strengthen local economy. They are key at the beginning of establishing community ownership and also for staying connected throughout operation and development.

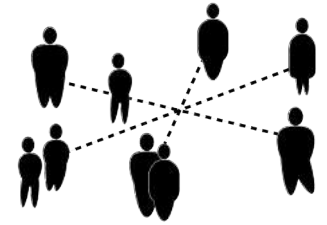
## Phases of lifecycle

- ◆ **Idea initiation:** Community ownership begins with community organizing based on networks of individuals and organizations with common needs and desires and will grow. This practice grounds the community ownership project in widespread concerns that are specific to a place and time. Community organizing tends to be more successful when tapping into existing social, cultural, and other existing networks.
- ◆ **Planning and programming:** As planning begins, who has a voice in the process is critical to defining the

goals of the project, which will drive all other phases. Networks and partnerships with the right organizations and individuals will help bring people to the planning process who can represent a broad base of constituents. These networks will also provide a pathway for future members of housing commons who have been involved in its creation and the existing community.

- ◆ **Design:** Networks and partnerships can help drive the selection of designers who can be part of the existing networks as well as role the community plays in the design process. The more established the partnerships are, the more trust, shared language, and understanding there will be for the communication of needs and desires for the design. The designers being part of community groups will give them personal experience to use in the design and a way to relate to other participants. As many design needs relate to specific to programming and culture, the stronger these connections are, the more successful the design will be.
- ◆ **Construction:** Professional construction services can be provided by partners and people in networks. This will help keep money in a given community and support local businesses.
- ◆ **Everyday occupation:** If a housing commons is to be integrated into the larger community, partnerships can drive ongoing programming and special events.
- ◆ **Generational turn-over:** Being connected to larger networks can help ease generational turn-over by

providing new members who are already connected to the housing commons.



### Design needs

- **Physical proximity:** Enables face-to-face interactions
- **Imprinting material culture:** Marks place identity in relation to community
- **Places to gather:** Affords physical presence of community groups
- **Creative programming:** Serves local needs

NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

# Welcoming all people

## Importance of welcoming all people

A welcoming policy is important for community ownership to not be an exclusive enclave. Public areas associated with housing can set the tone for the whole community. Private housing areas need not be welcoming to the public but physical space communicates welcoming to all people is important as new people join the community over time. The most important question is ‘to whom is it welcoming?’ An inclusive community might be specifically designed for marginalized groups with the concept of targeted universalism. Welcoming places are accessible to everyone including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Community ownership builds resources, which must be shared as to not perpetuate concentration of wealth and resources among the privileged. For a deeper understanding of how to be welcoming, especially to immigrants, please refer to “Welcoming Standard” available at [WelcomingAmerica.org](http://WelcomingAmerica.org).

## Relation to other commoning practices

Being welcoming happens through networks and partnerships to targeted groups especially in need of being welcomed. The community at large is welcomed at gatherings, traditions and rituals, as a contribution to the urban commons. Most importantly for a community to resist displacement, people living in a place in transition must be welcomed into participating in the process of transformation.

## Phases of lifecycle

- ◆ **Idea initiation:** An inclusive welcoming ideology must be a core value from the beginning.
- ◆ **Planning and programming:** Inclusive planning for a welcoming community must be core to decisions in planning and programming.
- ◆ **Design:** Inclusive public space that outsiders can get to know. Something everyone can see themselves in, not discriminatory, offensive or triggering.
- ◆ **Initial habitation:** Recruiting a diverse member group
- ◆ **Everyday occupation:** Constant recruitment, building traditions and identity.
- ◆ **Generational turn-over:** appealing to a diverse and targeted audience to be inclusive.



WELCOMING ALL PEOPLE

## Design needs

- **Nested scales of home:** Comfort occupying space
- **Imprinting material culture:** Signals welcoming attitude
- **Targeted universalism:** Specific marginalized groups are especially welcomed
- **Inclusive public space:** Affords users’ needs

# Informal everyday life

## Importance of informal everyday life

Informal everyday life is both a mechanism for lower thresholds for entry to a community and for creating resources through commoning. Transcultural interactions and encounters often happen in everyday mundane places like shops and streets. (Hou, 2016) By interacting on a personal level stereotypes can be broken down and the foundation for understanding can emerge. Living with other people in a housing commons lends itself to consultation or working together on small projects and improvements little by little. Patterns of use either in public space or a housing commons gradually become imprinted on the landscape.

## Relation to other commoning practices

Everyday life precedes and continues throughout processes of commoning and overall ease the transition of a place into community ownership. It is integral to the idea of the urban commons, gaining its strength by people living and creating in proximity to each other. The daily interactions of a place welcome new members, create and reinforce networks, support local businesses. It is bolstered by gatherings, traditions and rituals and by the presence of local businesses. Everyday interactions lead to individual personalization as people use their space and shared stewardship as they need to work together to live more comfortably together.

## Phases of lifecycle

- ◆ **Idea initiation:** “sites of everyday interaction” (Hou) create transcultural place in the first place.
- ◆ **Planning and programming:** The process of working together
- ◆ **Design:** Understanding the community life, design process relationships
- ◆ **Construction:** Working together
- ◆ **Initial habitation:** Shared experience, working together
- ◆ **Everyday occupation:** Just living, socializing, being neighbors, working together



INFORMAL EVERYDAY LIFE

## Design needs

- **Physical proximity:** Enables everyday interactions
- **Everyday circulation routes:** Integration of essential and nonessential activities
- **Bumping places:** Build community through socializing
- **Easy interventions:** The ability to fit space to everyday needs

# Local Economy

## Importance of local economy

Communities support one another economically and culturally. Local businesses accomplish both of these goals by sharing and creating culture and as a means of livelihood. Local enterprises keep the efforts of community members benefitting the community. It can also be a launch pad for bigger business ventures and serve as everyday gathering and bumping places for the community.

## Relation to other commoning practices

Local businesses are ways of building and strengthening networks and partnerships. They sustain the interactions of everyday life beyond planned events by being the sites of everyday interactions, either with coworkers or customers. Local enterprises also have a vested interest in maintaining and improving their local resources, for appeal to customers and as advertising. Local businesses add identity and are loved places in communities and their proprietors are public figures.

## Phases of lifecycle

- ◆ **Idea initiation:** Businesses can be displaced similar to residents.
- ◆ **Planning and programming:** Planning for a mix of uses needs to be intentional early on.
- ◆ **Design:** Considering where commercial or industrial uses are influences design including levels of publicness.
- ◆ **Construction:** Using local contractors for construction
- ◆ **Initial habitation:** Modifying spaces to fit needs. Tenant improvements can be streamlined.
- ◆ **Everyday Occupation:** Local businesses and other enterprises are an important part of community life.
- ◆ **Generational turn-over:** Businesses may turn over at a different rate than residents.



LOCAL ECONOMY

## Design needs

- **Physical proximity:** Affording access in everyday life
- **Community anchors:** Build community through culturally-relevant offerings
- **Inclusive public space:** Businesses project image as front door to community
- **Business activation:** Basis for lively public life
- **Modifiable spaces to change or add on to:** Businesses can shape space

# Traditions and rituals

## Importance of traditions and rituals

Traditions and rituals, gatherings, celebrations, and daily routines, happen both inside a housing commons, within other definitions of community, and with the public at large. They provide opportunities to build relationships, create, and share culture both for the facilitators and all who participate. Gatherings have the potential to create “safer time and space” a lesson from *Transcultural Placemaking* that creates an opportunity for cross-cultural understanding and learning through participation and appreciation. (Hou) Overall place identity is created and/or re-enforced through traditions and rituals.

## Relation to other commoning practices

Traditions, especially events and festivals, are an opportunity to reach out along specific partnerships and networks, the public at large and at the same time develop a stronger bond with an established community, all while creating opportunities for informal interactions, and local economy. An event can transform a space, enliven people’s imaginations about what it might become and catalyze more permanent transformations.

## Phases of lifecycle

- ◆ **Idea initiation:** community, identity and network building, opportunities for transcultural connections through informal and structured interactions (Hou)
- ◆ **Planning and programming:** Extend spirit of community, determine specific events to plan for, facilitated interactions, partner with existing events
- ◆ **Design:** Design for a variety of specific types of gatherings.
- ◆ **Construction:** Celebrate ground-breaking, ribbon-cutting, etc.
- ◆ **Initial habitation:** Celebrate with the larger community
- ◆ **Everyday Occupation:** Constant recruitment, building traditions and identity
- ◆ **Generational turn-over:** Newcomers already feel connected to traditions, room to modify traditions



TRADITIONS AND RITUALS

## Design needs

- **Imprinting material culture:** Appropriate for traditions
- **Places to host public events:** Affording public gatherings
- **Places for internal gatherings:** Affording local gathering types
- **Variety and flexibility of spaces:** Options for a range of gathering types including simultaneous gatherings
- **Accessible infrastructure:** For flexible use of gathering spaces

# Transformation in place

## Importance of transformation in place

Community-owned housing is an anti-displacement and place-keeping strategy by which people can stay in their communities under different governance structures. Depending on the building stock and community ownership models employed there will be different needs for how to physically transform the neighborhood to suit community-owned housing. Co-op conversion is a common method by which an apartment building is purchased by its tenants and requires minimal physical change, whereas adding housing to empty lots in a neighborhood requires new buildings. While the most important aspect of transformation in place is keeping a community intact, the neighborhood character, local businesses, public life, and neighborhood aesthetics also have an impact on a sense of place amidst a physical transition. Adaptive re-use is the architectural term for re-using historic buildings for new uses that might lead to continued place identity more than tearing down and building from scratch.

## Relation to other commoning practices

Transformation in place enables staying in place and the continuity of commoning practices such as networks and partnerships, traditions and rituals, local enterprise and informal everyday life. It will enable welcoming new members who are

already in the area and can benefit from but might not know to seek out community ownership. Renovation and additions provide small scale construction projects that more people can complete without professional or institutional assistance.



TRANSFORMATION IN PLACE

## Phases of lifecycle

- ◆ **Idea initiation:** Desire to stay in place
- ◆ **Planning and programming:** Implementing economic and governance transformation through partnerships, purchase, institutional support, fundraising, etc.
- ◆ **Design:** Adaptive re-use design and modification; maintaining public life and community anchors
- ◆ **Everyday occupation:** Continued adaptation

## Design needs

- **Variety and flexibility of spaces:** Options in types of physical spaces to suit a range of needs
- **Adaptive re-use:** Repurposing structures
- **Creative programming:** Matching existing local social and cultural assets to physical spaces
- **Clear and intuitive delineation of territories:** Redefinition of spaces

# Shared stewardship

## Importance of shared stewardship

Shared stewardship is the core of community ownership. A shared vision is necessary to shepherd a project through the process of creation. Owning land together implies shared rights of use and shared responsibility for maintenance. Shared stewardship requires definition of governance, participation, and work of members. There is much written, especially by Elinor Ostrom, on governance design principles that are likely to make self-governed groups succeed. Oscar Newman, in *Defensible Space*, lays out the argument for defining clear territories that help people to know what areas belong to them, to maintain and use either individually or as a group. When implemented thoughtfully, shared stewardship can lead to close social cohesion, pride in place, and a resource-rich housing commons.

## Relation to other commoning practices

By working together, members get to know each other and develop relationships that can lead to more informal interactions as neighbors. Shared stewardship opens the door for individuals to personalize their space by introducing new members to the rules of who is responsible for what and how much can be modified. Tasks of shared stewardship may be outsourced or consolidated in a large housing commons, leading to economic opportunities related to maintenance.

## Phases of lifecycle

- ◆ **Idea initiation:** Leadership of the process, from the spark of the idea.
- ◆ **Planning and programming:** Developing a vision for organizational and physical transformation and fleshing it out with goals, strategies, and programs.
- ◆ **Design:** Future residents participating in the design process
- ◆ **Construction:** Coordination of construction
- ◆ **Initial habitation:** Group personalization
- ◆ **Everyday occupation:** Stewardship through improvements and maintenance
- ◆ **Generational turn-over:** New group making needed changes



SHARED STEWARDSHIP

## Design needs

- **Nested scales of home:** A sense of belonging at multiple scales
- **Imprinting material culture:** Marking shared identity
- **Clear and intuitive delineation of territories:** Empower personalization
- **Ongoing adaptations:** Large changes as needed
- **Modifiable spaces to change or add on to:** Ease of modifications
- **Easy interventions:** Take advantage of agency to place-make

# Individual personalization

## Importance of individual personalization

Individual personalization adds to a commons in two main ways, allowing people to feel at home, and adding to the overall uniqueness of a place over time. Making one's home suit one's needs is a deep human need. The ability to personalize one's home, making substantial modifications satisfies this need. Like most homes, housing commons are passed on from one family or group of occupants to the next. When a place is cared for and improved over time by people sequentially, value accumulates in a unique way. The accretion of personalization and improvement over time tend to make a place give the impression of a collective home, and thus welcoming to people who can imagine themselves personalizing it too.

## Relation to other recommendations

Individual personalization will often lead to shared stewardship, as neighbors naturally work together on shared property or things that affect everyone. It might lead to a local economy as some people need or want to outsource their domestic work. Personalization is one process that transforms a place through people's involvement. All of these aspects lead to more informal everyday interactions as people see each other doing domestic work, work together, and engage in economic interactions.

## Phases of lifecycle

- ◆ **Initial habitation:** Initial personalization of frames
- ◆ **Everyday occupation:** Modifying space to fit needs, making changes over time when needed
- ◆ **Generational turn-over:** re-personalization by next member



INDIVIDUAL PERSONALIZATION

## Design needs

- **Frames to personalize:** Places to make one's own
- **Modifiable spaces to change or add on to:** Ease of making changes

## Chapter 5

# Design Toolkit for Community-Owned Placemaking

This toolkit is meant for community leaders and professionals to design spaces that support urban, mixed-use community-owned housing. The toolkit includes seven spatial strategies in three categories: physically and emotionally connected to tie into existing space and social structures; supporting community life to provide the right kinds of space to support important activities; and changeable over time to encourage continued placemaking and stewardship over the entire lifecycle of a development. These strategies are meant to work together to support the many types of commoning practices that contribute to the success of community-owned housing.

## Methodology

As described in chapter four, my research question asks what types of spaces support inclusive, community-owned placemaking. I have proposed that design elements can support commoning practices that address goals of lowered thresholds to belonging and agency to place-make. This approach is illustrated in figure 5-1.

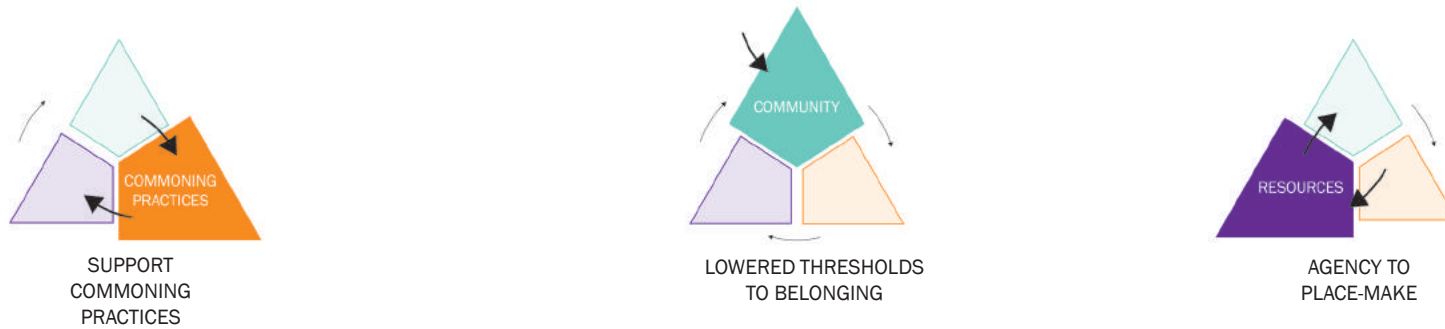
The design toolkit presented in this chapter is a version of a ‘pattern language’ in the tradition of Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein (1974). In order for the toolkit to be as applicable as possible to multiple and plural cultures, I do not recommend any specific dimensions or forms but rather ways to think about or arrange spaces. The design recommendations aim to afford the activities that generally support community ownership processes. When applied to a real community, specific commoning practices will have to be determined and then designed to fit the specific case and context.

The findings presented in this chapter emerged in an iterative process, proceeding logically in the order of goals, commoning practices and then design considerations. These findings are the result of analysis of the case studies, compared against reviewed literature and iterated through conversation with my advisors, reviewers, and informants. My methodology is summarized in figure 5-1,

The majority of this chapter contains my ‘design toolkit for community-owned placemaking’ which elaborates on categories of design considerations and includes an example

from a case study, explained in the caption for each. Each design consideration in the toolkit corresponds to a commoning practice that it is meant to support, as indicated by the icon next to it. More explanation of the commoning practices is found in chapter four. Figure 5-2 is a rough illustration of how the design recommendations in the tool kit can be integrated into an urban environment to support commoning practices

## GOALS FOR COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP



## COMMONING PRACTICES



## DESIGN TOOLKIT



Figure 5-1: Methodology summary

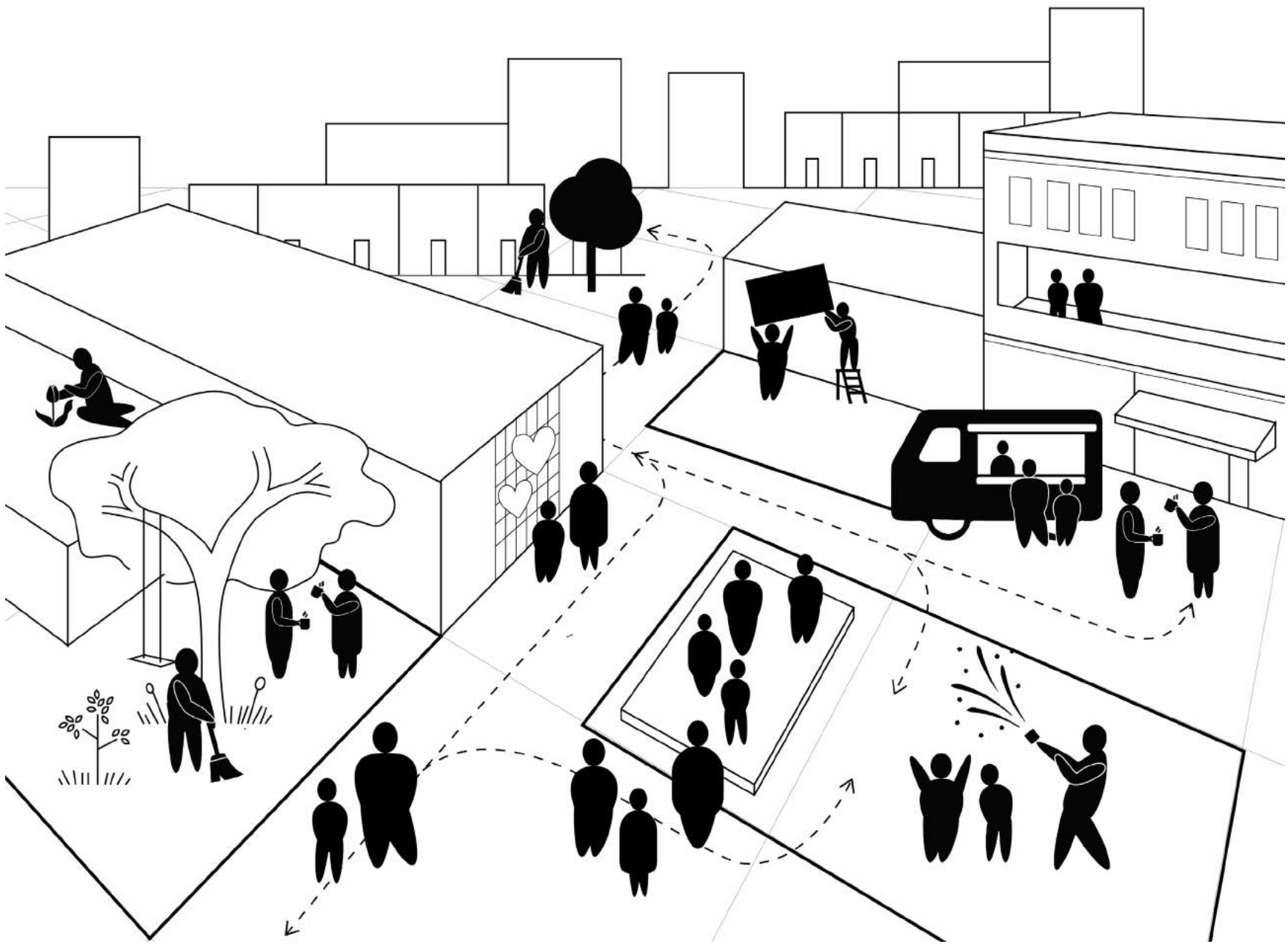
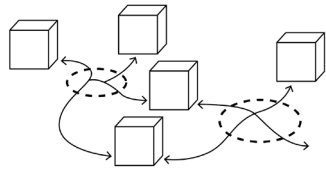


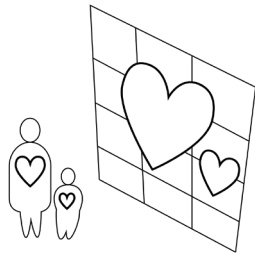
Figure 5-2: Illustration of toolkit recommendations integrated with each other

# DESIGN TOOLKIT

## PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY CONNECTED

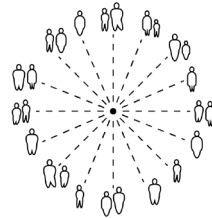


CONNECTED AND NEARBY

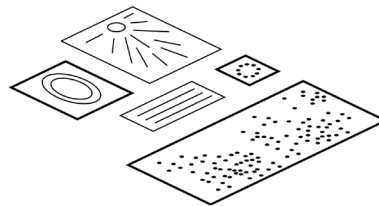


LOVABLE

## SUPPORTING COMMUNITY LIFE

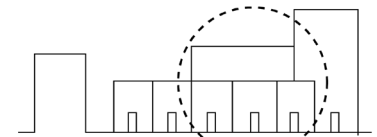


SPACE TO BE

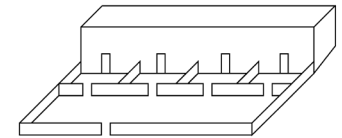


PLACES TO GATHER

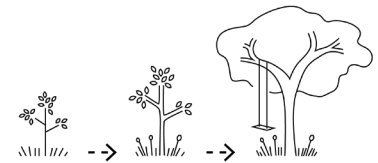
## CHANGEABLE OVER TIME



ADAPTIVE



MODIFIABLE



FLEXIBLE

Figure 5-3: Toolkit summary

## Connected and nearby

The urban commons consists of real networks and relationships between people and organizations in urban space. Community ownership can be thought of as nested inside the urban commons and as such is a site of everyday social and material interactions. These interactions include business, expressions of culture, and construction of places that are partly enabled through physical proximity.

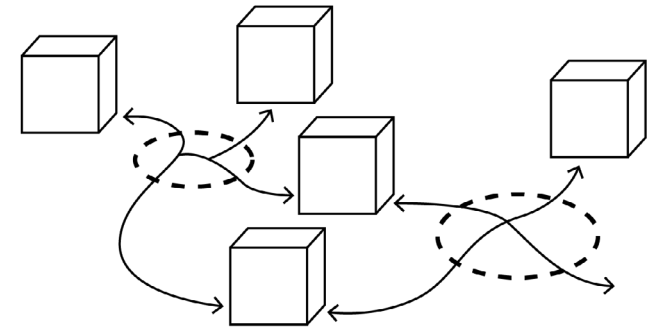
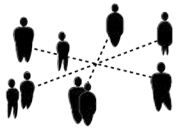


Figure 5-5: Connected and nearby diagram

### Physical proximity



Physical proximity increases the likelihood of chance encounters through everyday circulation routes and bumping places. Repeated exposure is one way people become familiar with each other and, in the right circumstances, meet each other. Once relationships are established, proximity makes it easier to maintain them. The personal and professional relationships formed are the foundation of networks and partnerships.

### Community anchors



Businesses and organizations create a draw that helps determine who will be the public forming a community in a given place. Local businesses provide economic opportunity for community members and deliver culturally relevant goods, services and experiences with local flavor and personal connections. Public-facing businesses and organizations will largely set the vibe of a community.

### Everyday circulation routes



Passing by places and people adds to familiarity and influences how interactions take place. The quality and quantity of public space will help determine people's travel behaviors, such as what mode to choose, and how much to stop along the way. Travel behaviors in turn influence the experience of community life and interactions that ensue.

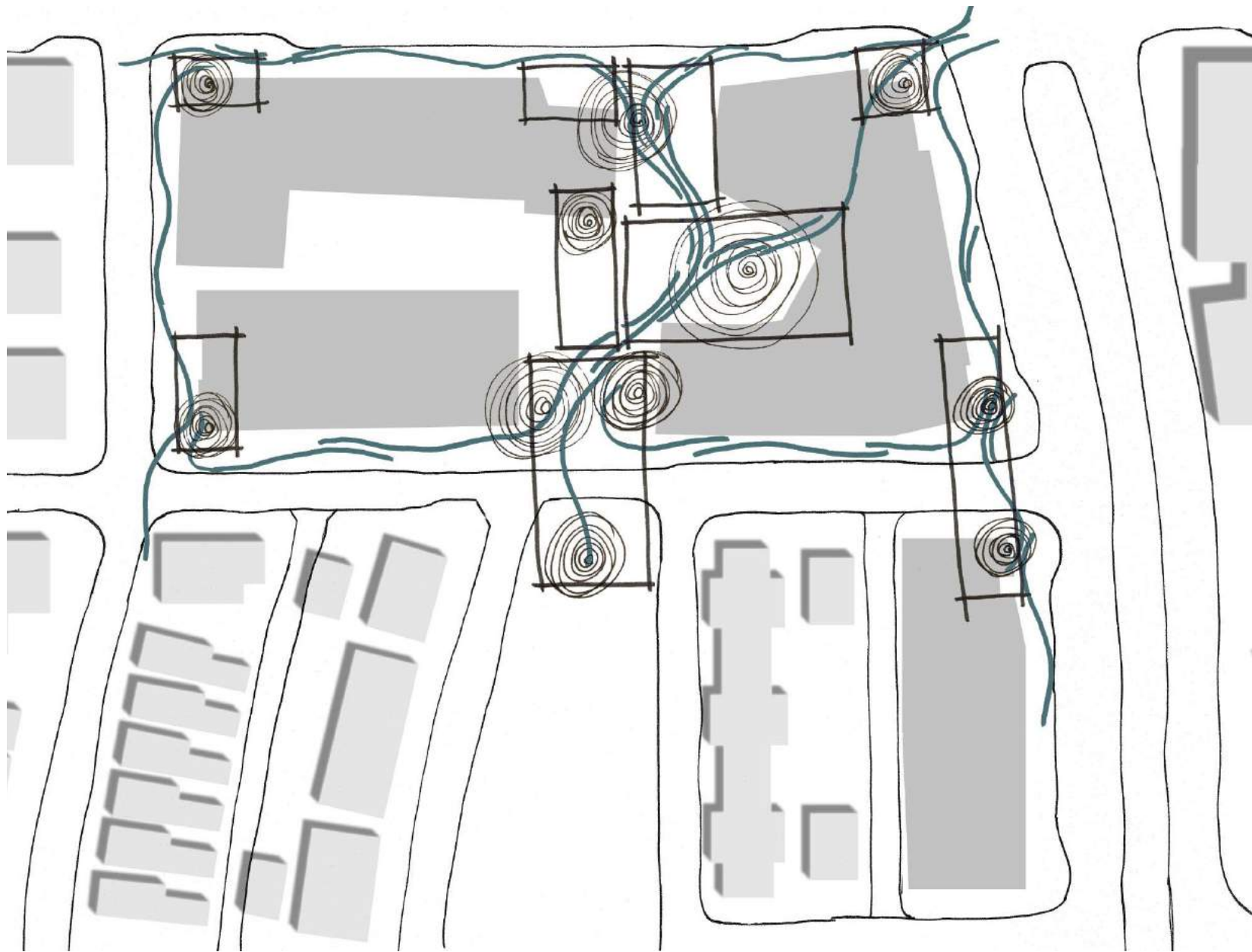


Figure 5-6: Node concept in Othello Square Master Plan (Weber Thompson)

## Lovable

People like to take care of and improve upon a space that they love. Good design inspires care and investment in a positive feedback loop.

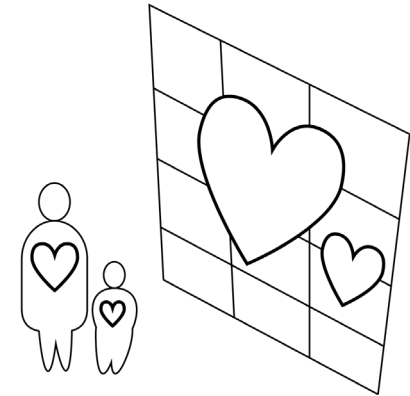


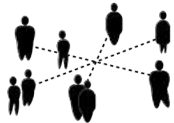
Figure 5-7 Lovable diagram

### Nested scales of home



Spatial organization of housing and surroundings can make clear boundaries in concentric circles of private, semi-private, semi-public and public space. A hierarchy of territory helps one know with what area to identify with as home and, at the semi-public and semi-private scales, with whom they can build a shared identity.

### Imprinting material culture



Members will bring with them their own knowledge and experience relating to material culture and art. A physical place created by its members will reflect their aesthetic preferences and identity. This will, in turn, make those and other people in their networks more closely reflected in the physical resources of a commons.

### Targeted universalism



Instead of designing for the “standard” user, targeted universalism calls for designing to make a space accessible to people who are most often ignored and marginalized in society. This might result in adding specific amenities, considering overall layout, and details such as how to arrange outdoor seating areas or what plants or art to select.

## ETHNOBOTANICAL GEOGRAPHICAL RANGE

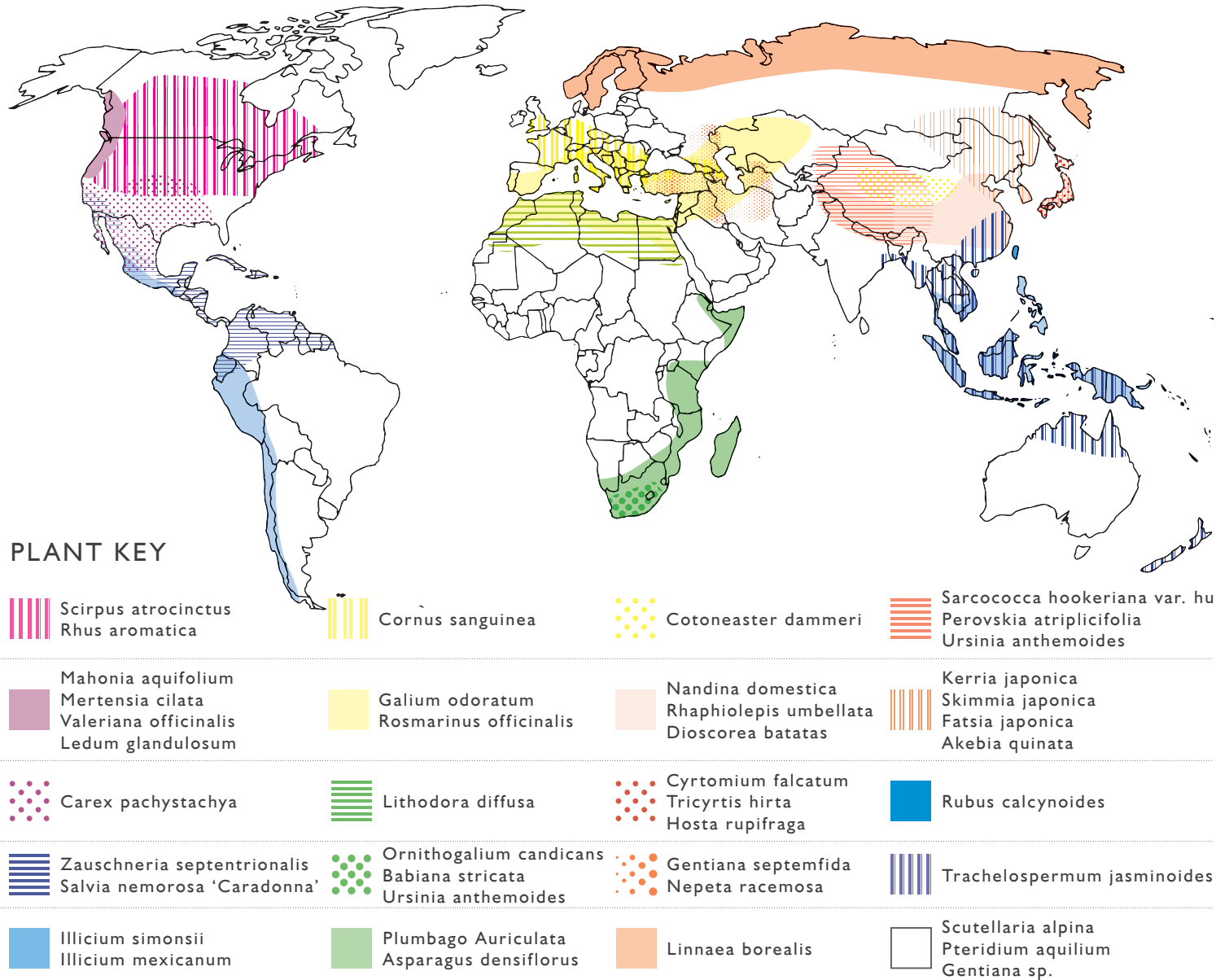


Figure 5-8: An ethno-botanical planting palette reaches out to immigrant and refugee users of the site and also is nice for everyone. (Building C Design Review Board Package, Weber Thompson)

## Space to be

‘Space to be’ refers to places where everyone is welcome to engage in informal everyday interactions and encounters. Welcoming public space sets the tone for a meaningfully inclusive community. Informal daily interactions can sow the seeds for and nourish relationships at all levels.

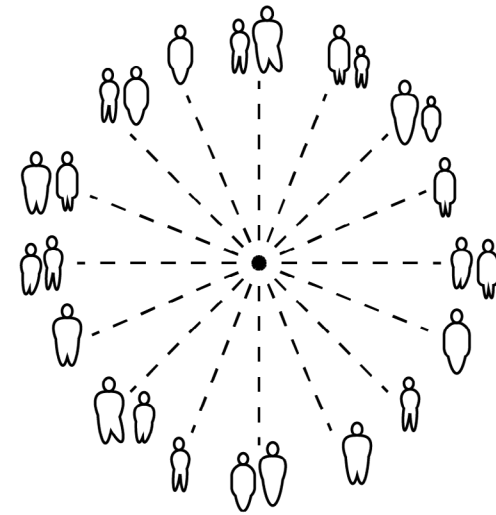


Figure 5-9: Space to be diagram

### Inclusive public space



Inclusive public space means providing a pleasant environment that adds to everyone’s experience in the city. It includes a safe pedestrian environment where people of all ages and abilities feel welcomed to linger, sit and stay, and express themselves. This includes culturally or programmatically-specific amenities to suit the community.

### Bumping places



Places where people like to stay and hang out, sometimes called “bumping places” generate community life. Bumping places may be businesses, public indoor or outdoor space where there is a reason to come or something to do. Varying by culture, climate, and individuals, bumping places might have programs like playgrounds, or just be places to rest on people’s everyday routes.

### Business activation



Businesses activate city life with seating or shopping in public space. Flea markets, food vendors or performers add to urban liveliness. Businesses have a stake in creating a pleasant environment for their customers so help moderate public space and keep up with maintenance. Local businesses are part of networks and traditions (such as providing meeting space or sponsoring gatherings) that are mutually beneficial for the community and businesses.



Figure 5-10: The area in front of the general store of Christiania is a bumping place where local community members regularly visit with one another. In December a bright hyggelig tent set up in front recognizes the importance of the place.

## Places to gather

Intentional gatherings of different shapes and sizes are important across the entire lifecycle of a community-owned project. Events reach out to the community at large to bring new people in to community-owned projects. At meetings and work parties people form relationships by working on projects together. Celebrations and festivals strengthen relationships, social networks, and a sense of place identity.

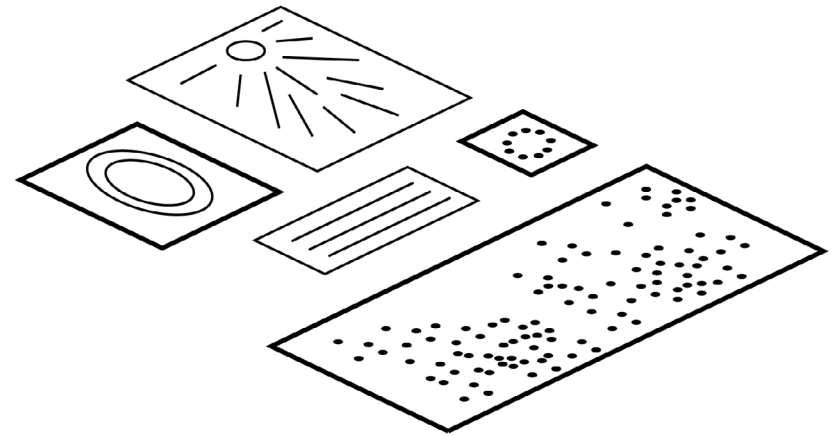


Figure 5-11: Places to gather diagram

### Variety and flexibility of spaces



Different types of gatherings will be best served by different scales of space, levels of enclosure, amenities provided, and other factors. A combination of indoor, outdoor, indoor-outdoor, and other configurations offer different feelings and amenities. Multiple different spaces rather than just flexible spaces will provide the opportunity for simultaneous gatherings to serve a larger community.

### Places to host public events



Public events may be the first time people are introduced to a community. Longevity of community ownership can be aided by good public relations and having a pipeline of new members who already feel like a part of the larger community. Being able to host the public requires significant resources and staffing. Design can help manage the burdens of hosting the public through separation of territories, providing amenities, low-maintenance spaces or other creative means. Off-site public relations may be more appropriate for small residential communities.

### Places for internal gatherings



Commoning practices such as holding meetings and work parties and celebrating traditions require physical places. A variety of places specific to meet the needs of the communities and their activities might be indoor, outdoor, or a combination thereof. The program and design of these spaces will be entirely determined by the specific needs of each community.



## Adaptive

In the context of economic displacement, a major concern is having to move from one's home. Community ownership that resists displacement will mean existing residents transforming an existing place. As economic and ownership systems shift, physical resources will most likely need to shift to reflect them while retaining historical connections.

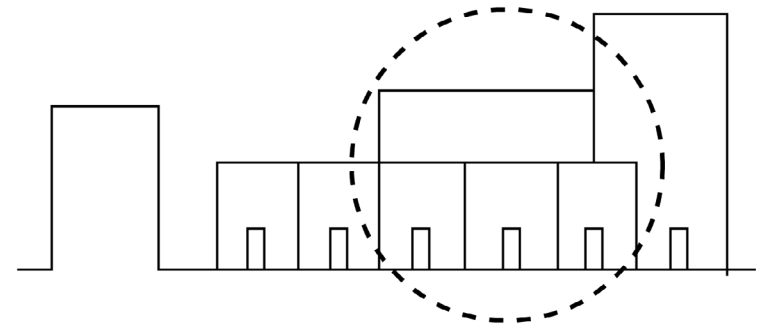
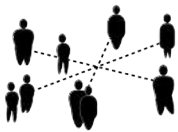


Figure 5-13: Adaptive diagram



### Adaptive re-use

When possible, re-using buildings and open spaces is the most economically efficient and environmentally-friendly way to transition to a new form of organization. Maintaining physical structures is a way to retain history and memory that can lend to identity. Renovation and additions provide smaller scale construction projects that more people are able to complete without professional assistance.



### Creative programming

Whether a newly built or converted community-owned project, the budget will most likely be tight and creative programming can help create efficiencies. Layering benefits of spaces and amenities can be achieved by way of flexible space, clever design, and timing of programming. Integrating and coordinating uses also builds understanding and facilitates interactions between user groups.



### Ongoing Adaptations

Over time, people's needs come up that have not been anticipated. The ability to modify spaces or uses will help people continue to use their space well. Modular systems and interchangeable parts as well as designated caretakers and resources can anticipate the need for continued adaptation.



Figure 5-14: Courtyard in Norrebro Charlote garden (Co-op) Courtyard. Previous light industrial buildings were removed and a lush garden planted. The path echoes the access road previously in its place.

## Modifiable

Modifying the environment around ourselves to feel like home also satisfies a deep human need for agency. Living with other people in a housing commons lends itself to consultation or working together on small projects and improvements little-by-little. Through everyday life and small alterations, patterns of use gradually become imprinted on the landscape. Design can support peoples in modifying space to suit their needs and feel at home.

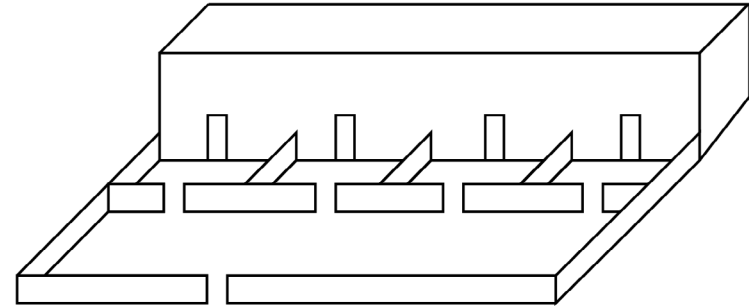


Figure 5-15: Modifiable diagram

### Clear and intuitive delineation of territories



People will be more likely to modify space if they feel it is their own. By delineating what space belongs to whom, people will know how to organize themselves in order to modify it. While property lines can be drawn on a map or outlined in fences, it is most effective to integrate territorial delineation in the overall site planning such as clustering buildings, aligning roads and paths, and placing plants.

### Modifiable spaces to change or add on to



It will be easiest for people to modify their space if the design allows for it. Designs encouraging modification may include modular systems or simply by leaving space clear and ready for improvements. Easily accessible provision of utility connections – for energy, water, sewer, amplification, or other purposes help to allow spatial shifts. Outdoor surfaces finished with soil, gravel or unit pavers are easier to modify than those with poured concrete. Planting areas are one easy way people can modify their spaces with the flexible medium of plants.



Figure 5-16: Tinggården Group B common green with modifications by residents: a flag pole in memory of a resident and a planting area where a parking place used to be.

## Flexible

Flexibility refers to the way the same space may be used at different times. Flexibility in furnishing and decoration allows people to make their space feel like a home. Flexible public uses are a way to bring urban vitality into a project in ways that might make them more compatible with residential uses. Changing uses at different times makes a place dynamic and unique.

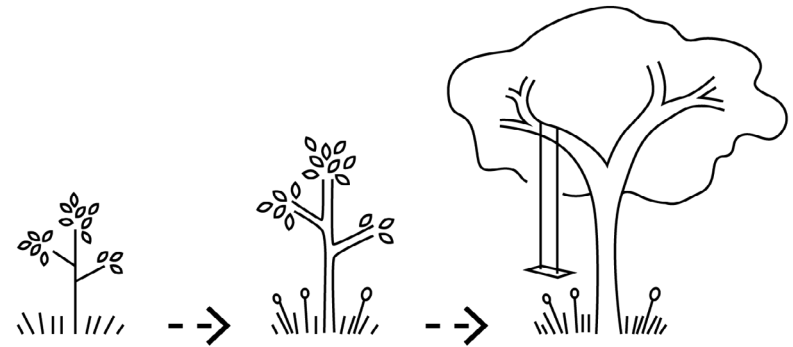


Figure 5-17: Flexible diagram

### Frames to personalize



Places designated for personalization is a way to make space for expression of each person’s identity and culture within a larger community. These opportunities can be provided at dwelling units with private yards, balconies, exterior and interior decoration of homes. At the community scale additional personal spaces can be allocated with garden plots, storage areas, personal work spaces, etc.

### Accessible Infrastructure



Accessible infrastructure refers to the provision of electricity, wireless internet, amplification, light and even physical scaffolding in gathering spaces. These amenities can make a space more functional for everyday use as well as for events. Infrastructure can be accessed flexibly and transform a space to perform a range of functions at different times.

### Easy interventions



Easy interventions are things that community members can make together, perhaps at a work party. These things may address a particular need in the space or add identity through art and design. Designating a budget for collective improvements and a process to decide on and execute them can support this process. Personal and home-made improvements add to the character and create pleasant spaces as they accumulate over time.



Figure 5-18: New Holly Market Garden farm stand where food is grown and sold by residents of New Holly. This place is adjacent to the Othello Square site and the design proposal honors the connection between the places. (Seattle.gov)

## Summary

This design toolkit can be summarized with three categories: physically and emotionally connected, supporting community life, and changeable over time. **Physically and emotionally connected** design supports networks and partnerships, the local economy and informal everyday life by making places that are relevant to their community. It can also support welcoming all people through interventions that specifically connect to targeted groups. Design that **supports community life** creates ideal settings for social interactions, local economy, and events that can reach out to underserved groups and support community formation that is necessary for commoning. **Changeable** design over time affords individuals and groups to exert agency over their space. It encompasses short-term interventions done by community groups (setting up outdoor furniture), long-term individual personalization (growing a garden), allowing for quick transformations individuals can do (play music on outdoor speakers), or long-term adaptations that can transform a whole neighborhood (widespread co-op conversion). Because the design considerations are related to the enactment of unique commoning practices in every community, there are infinite ways for them to take shape.

Together, these tools can help achieve a balance between the human need to shape our environment (agency to place-make), and the need for community (lowered thresholds to belonging). Synergies exist between the design considerations as well as the commoning practices. Modifiable spaces allow

communities to more easily imprint their material cultures. Business activation can happen at gatherings or help create bumping places in everyday life.

A word of caution is needed though: these design considerations will only support these goals to the extent the commoning practices they support do. Design that does not relate to activities existing community members participate in cannot be expected to support community life. Design may not be the driver of societal transformation, but by supporting commoning practices it has the potential to bolster community-ownership efforts.

## Chapter 6

# Conclusion

In this thesis I have considered the relevance of commons theory to housing and urban design, applied it to case studies, and developed a framework of design that supports the commoning practices of urban community-owned housing. In this conclusion, I offer an approach for designers to align themselves with the processes of urban housing commons, and note limitations and opportunities for future research. Finally, I return to the many reasons this thesis endeavors to support community ownership movement. Community ownership is a suite of models of self-governed urban communities that can support pathways to affordable housing, resiliency, and racial equity.

# **An approach for landscape architects working with community-owned projects**

## **Understanding commons for design**

Understanding the commons explains to landscape architects and other design professionals why working with community-owned projects is different from a standard community involvement process. The cycle of commoning gives a starting point for understanding that people can and do work together to improve place-based resources, as demonstrated in the case studies. A commons process is led by people who organize commoning practices and form resources that directly serve themselves. Through inclusivity and incorporation of new members over time, as well as by proliferation of the model, community ownership has the potential to have an empowering and equalizing effect on society by redistributing power from a few people to many.

This thesis advocates for landscape architects to partner with community-owned projects over a long timeframe. This approach does not devalue the skills and knowledge of design professionals, but it does acknowledge that these contributions are only one part of the whole. The leadership of a community-owned project is importantly with the community itself. Mutual respect and trust between leadership and professional consultants including landscape architects is the foundation

of these partnerships. With a long-term partnership, designers can support the many phases of specific commoning practices and resource creation throughout the lifecycle of a project. By being part of the big picture of the community-owned process, design consultants can add value to the design work by seeing how design activities can have synergy with other aspects of commoning. For instance, design workshops might provide opportunities to support local businesses or be facilitated to strengthen networks and partnerships. Early design interventions might support public gathering spaces or frames for personalization to support commoning practices all along the way.

This approach focuses on design that supports activities rather than feelings. One can design to support activities or ‘commoning practices’ that constitute community ownership. The ‘toolkit for community-owned placemaking’ references commoning practices that each design recommendation supports. This approach to design affords commoning practices, should people organize them, rather than suggesting the design itself will make the commoning practices happen. However, a landscape architect cannot design a place simply for “informal everyday life” or any other general commoning practice. Commoning practices need to be identified for the community members and tailored to the specific needs of those who are most often excluded from informal everyday life, and then adapted to the site and contextual constraints.

Each cycle of commoning operates on a single scale, nested inside other scales of either commons or other forms of

organization. By defining the scale of a commons, a designer can understand who the design is serving, what commoning practices will happen there and how to design for them. For example, in the Othello neighborhood, the limited-equity cooperative is a small-scale housing commons with defined members, Othello Square is a medium-scale community commons belonging to all the members of its organizations and as well as visitors to the activities held there. The Othello light rail station belongs to a public entity, Sound Transit, which might be thought of as a commons belonging to the entire public of the Puget Sound Region, assuming it fully represents its constituents. Understanding the scale of the commons illuminates who it should serve and how they might have a hand in its creation. The smaller the scale, the more individual influence someone can have and the more directly the design can serve their needs.

### **Commons facilitate inclusive design**

A commons approach alone is not enough to achieve goals such as transcultural placemaking, racial equity, or being welcoming to immigrants; but these important goals can be well supported by the cycle of commoning. Without substantial attention given to means of lowering barriers and thresholds to entry, commoning activities will replicate uneven patterns of resource distribution and discrimination prevalent in society. This means making sure that all people, especially those traditionally marginalized, have access to the means of commoning and are empowered in the process. If a community's members are involved in the project initiation and planning,

establishing traditions and rituals that create safer space and are compatible with cultural practices, and are active in designing needed programs and places to support their communities, these efforts will deliver specific benefits to this community. Including traditionally excluded people in the cycle of commoning will make it more likely design outcomes will be inclusive.

My proposed approach for inclusive commons creation thus has two major goals: lowering thresholds to belonging (entry to commons) and agency to place-make (resource creation through commoning). Commoning practices of 'networks and partnerships' and 'welcoming all people' specifically address lowering thresholds to belonging while 'traditions and rituals', 'local economy,' 'transformation in place' and 'informal everyday life', have a dual purpose of lowering thresholds and agency to place-make. When the thresholds to belonging are lowered to include traditionally marginalized groups, transcultural and equitable placemaking has the possibility to occur from a place of ownership. Resources will be richer and have a transformative ability to not only secure real gains for people but also to be empowered through the experience of ownership.

### **How to apply this framework**

The design guidance in this thesis is meant for community-owned project leaders ready to transform their vision to reality. It is also meant for design professionals, working with these community groups and looking for guidance specifically for transcultural community-owned urban mixed-use housing in

an American city. It can serve as an introduction to the concept of the commons and community-ownership, and identification of core commoning practices. Finally, it provides design considerations to support those commoning practices to help reach inclusivity and self-determination.

These design recommendations are meant to serve commoning practices in general, not to the specific ways they are carried out. A designer is always needed to apply these concepts to a specific community and site. This thesis can be used throughout the project lifecycle, in an early research phase as a road map or throughout the process as a guidebook.

The design recommendations in the tool kit are meant for communities that are engaged in community ownership work. They are meant to be responsive to a unique community – what are the local celebrations and daily activities? How do people organize maintenance routines? What are important community anchors? Without knowing these things it is impossible to apply the tool kit to a site. For this reason, the tool kit is not suitable for speculative development.

The design toolkit might also be useful to development that is not community-owed. As community is becoming scarcer in American society, social community in housing is increasingly demanded by residents and marketed as such by developers, landlords, and property management companies. While this is not the intention of the toolkit, its elements may prove beneficial to those in the real estate market and residents. Physically connected places that support community life might help fight loneliness with opportunities to meet neighbors and

potential community members. Allowing for modification might be useful for incentivizing long-term residents, lowering costs for landlords. Personalization may reduce maintenance costs for landlords or property management companies and reduce vandalism. Adaptive re-use may add to the appeal of design, reduce the environmental impact of construction and encourage people to stay in place. Creating inclusive public space and designing for community anchors have potential to benefit the community at large.

Following the logic of Winifred Curran and Trina Hamilton in their 2018 book *Just Green Enough*, in order to reduce the risk of displacement I recommend the toolkit be implemented in ways that provide value to existing neighborhood residents more than increase a neighborhood's value in the eyes of outside investors. For example, creating a new gathering place could either fulfill a specific community need or contribute to mainstream popularization of a neighborhood. Aesthetic improvements could imprint material culture of invisible communities or change the image of the neighborhood. If existing community members lead the effort of development, improvements are more likely to serve residents themselves.

However, improving a neighborhood for existing residents may not be enough to prevent displacement. Increased social, cultural and physical capital of a neighborhood can translate into rising real estate prices, and cause economic displacement, as argued by David Harvey (2013). This thesis argues that not only should existing residents guide programming

and design decisions, they should also have legal ownership of land so they can reap economic benefits of land value increases. Rather than being a neighborhood development strategy in general, my proposed design toolkit strategies is primarily meant to support the commoning practices that support economic and social structures of community ownership.

## **Limitations and future research**

This thesis is limited by its scope. The case studies are mostly from Denmark, one country with a long history of community-owned housing. The more I learn, it seems that most countries and cultures have manifestations of the commons. There is a wealth of case studies from around the world and the United States that would make for interesting subjects and offer a more cross-cultural perspective than this thesis can offer. Another limitation of my choice of case studies is that two of the four have been converted to community-ownership from other original uses. Although adaptive re-use is a valuable method of placemaking, these case studies do not explicitly test design theories for purpose-built developments. Additionally, new construction of community-owned housing is necessary in young cities such as Seattle which does not have enough building stock to convert. More examples of purpose-built community-owned housing would provide more precedents for designers.

The design recommendations I present are relevant to landscape architecture and focus on the context, configuration and program of community-owned housing. Other investigations from the points of view of urban design

and planning, architecture, or interior architecture that support community ownership would also be helpful in the design of such projects. Additionally, my recommendations are meant for urban mixed-use environments for reasons discussed in the introduction, but do not necessarily apply to other contexts. They also do not apply to all types of commons such as natural resources.

Finally, this thesis attempts to incorporate race and social justice into its theoretical basis and design recommendations. However, close evaluation of commons theory, commoning practices, and design recommendations for community ownership with an exclusively race and social justice lens would benefit the community ownership movement.

## **In support of community ownership**

This thesis is meant as a contribution to the community ownership movement by proposing a framework of design considerations for community-owned housing. By focusing on enabling community-specific commoning practices that work toward agency to place-make and access to belonging, design has the potential to contribute to the success of community ownership. I offer this work because community ownership has been shown to be a viable model of organizing society that promotes economic and social equity.

Community ownership contributes toward solutions to many pressing issues our cities face today, namely lack of community control, economic displacement, and climate

change-induced stresses. As a self-organized and -governed model, community ownership deepens local democracy and is entirely responsive to specific community needs. Removing profit through shared property ownership creates the financial possibility of permanently affordable housing. The social capital generated through community ownership is critical for climate resiliency that requires coping with everyday stresses and disaster response. Community ownership provides a framework that can support racial justice by changing urban power structures embedded in ownership. The combination of resilience strategies with anti-displacement strategies is especially important for marginalized communities that are disproportionately burdened by both of these challenges. Community-owned housing offers access to urban resilience resources, social capital, and continuity of home that contribute to stability in the face of climate change.

Both the case studies and theory discussed in this thesis support the multi-scalar organization of commons both legally and psychologically. On this urban scale, community-owned housing fits into a larger picture of sustainable, livable, and dense cities with lowered carbon footprints per capita. Furthermore, as extractive economies are largely responsible for climate catastrophe, a commons approach offers a framework for an alternative society based instead on self-governance and cooperation.

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DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

October 4, 2018

Dear Roxanne C Glick:

On 10/4/2018, the University of Washington Human Subjects Division (HSD) reviewed the following application:

Table with 2 columns: Field (Type of Review, Title of Study, Investigator, IRB ID, Funding) and Value (Initial Study, Ownership and Sense of Ownership in Community-Owned Housing Models of Denmark, Roxanne C Glick, STUDY00005891, Name: \*Gift through the UW, Grant Office ID: N/A, Funding Source ID: N/A)

Exempt Status

HSD determined that your proposed activity is human subjects research that qualifies for exempt status (Category 2).

- This determination is valid for the duration of your research.
• This means that your research is exempt from the federal human subjects regulations, including the requirement for IRB approval and continuing review.
• Depending on the nature of your study, you may need to obtain other approvals or permissions to conduct your research. For example, you might need to apply for access to data (e.g., to obtain UW student data). Or, you might need to obtain permission from facilities managers to approach possible subjects or conduct research procedures in the facilities (e.g., Seattle School District; the Harborview Emergency Department).

If you consider changes to the activities in the future and know that the changes will require IRB review (or you are not certain), you may request a review or new determination by submitting a Modification to this application. For information about what changes require a Modification, refer to the GUIDANCE: Exempt Research.

Thank you for your commitment to ethical and responsible research. We wish you great success!

Sincerely,
Ariana

Ariana Chantée, CIP
Human Subjects Review Administrator
achantee@uw.edu | 206-616-9690

Roxanne Glick

Valle Scholarship Independent Learning

Copenhagen, Denmark

Fall 2018

### Case Study Protocol

Housing ownership models' effect on/implication for sense of community and ownership via social patterns and group dynamics in common spaces

### Field research guidelines

- Focus on social patterns and group dynamics as design criteria indicators (Kim)
- Seek multiple sources of information for each finding (Yin)
- Establish a chain of evidence that ties the report to database to research questions (Yin)
- Cultivate research partnership with subjects, help them tell their stories, offer something to them (Yin)
- Develop my research skills of question-asking, listening, adaptiveness, openness (Yin)

### Research Questions

1. In what forms of community ownership, resident democracy and self-management do residents **feel ownership** over common spaces?
2. How does community ownership, resident democracy, and self-management affect the original and ongoing **design process and creation of physical space**?
3. What aspects of these processes are important for **creating a sense of community and collective ownership of the common spaces**?
4. Is a sense of community ownership over common spaces unique and valuable for creating a sense of belonging, community, solidarity?
5. How do residents feel their housing situation compares to others? How does it contribute to their quality of life/life satisfaction?
6. What community ownership, resident democracy or self-management strategies might be applicable to the Seattle area and US urban and cultural context?
7. Do social patterns and group dynamics in these communities reveal guiding design principles that could be helpful for designing new community-controlled housing?

### Revised Questions after writing coop case study report:

1. What kind of housing is it?
2. What does cooperative ownership mean to residents, financially?
3. How has the courtyard come to be the way it is?

4. How do people use the common space? What kind of community life happens there? What does community life look like? Where does it take place?
5. What are common spaces used for? How often?
6. Do residents in this form of community ownership, resident democracy and self-management **feel ownership** over common spaces?
7. How does community ownership, resident democracy, and self-management affect the original and ongoing **design process and creation of physical space**?
8. When there are maintenance and improvements to be made, who initiates them and how does it happen? Do you feel like you are part of the process?
9. What aspects are important for **creating a sense of collective ownership of the common spaces**?
10. Does a sense of community ownership over common spaces create a sense of belonging, community, solidarity?
11. Do you feel like this cooperative affects the neighborhood it's in?
12. How do residents feel their housing situation compares to others? How does it contribute to their quality of life/life satisfaction?
13. Do social patterns and group dynamics in these communities reveal guiding design principles that could be helpful for designing new community-controlled housing?
14. What community ownership, resident democracy or self-management or design strategies might be applicable to the Seattle area and US urban and cultural context?

#### Brief case study outline

1. Documentation
2. Tour or info meeting
3. Direct observation of design and how people use space
  - a. Diagrams, photos
  - b. Field notes/ immediate reflections
4. Write factual profile
5. Write narrative report
6. If possible give report to a community leader for review and revision

#### Extended case study outline

1. Documentation
2. Tour or info meeting
3. Interviews
  - Tour by resident
  - Mental map
  - Recorded interview conversation up to 45 minutes
4. Direct Observation
  - Diagrams, photos
  - Field notes/ immediate reflections
5. Write factual profile

6. Write narrative report
7. Give report to residents for review and revision

Roxanne Glick

Valle Scholarship Independent Learning

Copenhagen, Denmark

Fall 2018

#### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – Nørrebro Co-op

I'm conducting research on how different ownership models effect people's experience of their home and common spaces.

#### TOUR:

How do you feel about the spaces?

How do you use the spaces, how do you see other people using them?

How have the spaces come to be the way they are?

#### ASK:

##### Housing tenure info

- Do you rent or own your apartment?
- How long have you lived here?
- Why did you choose to move here?
- How do you feel this housing situation compares to other situations?
- How long do you plan on living here? What's next? Why?
- Do you see your home as a financial investment? Primary?
- How certain are you that you can continue living here as long as you'd like to?

Do you feel like your part of a community here and in what way? What makes you feel connected?

Do you feel a sense of ownership over the common spaces? How so?

When there are maintenance and improvements to be made, who initiates them and how does it happen? Do you feel like you are part of the process?

Have you noticed any particular social patterns or group dynamics in common spaces?

Do you feel like this cooperative affects the neighborhood it's in?

On the whole, how do you feel about living here?

#### Also:

Have you made anything in the yard?

Roxanne Glick

Valle Scholarship Independent Learning

Copenhagen, Denmark

Fall 2018

#### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL - Tinggården

I'm conducting research on how different ownership models effect people's experience of their home and common spaces.

#### TOUR:

1. How have the common spaces **come to be** the way they are?
2. How do you and others **use** the common spaces?
3. How do you **feel** about the common spaces?

#### ASK:

##### Housing tenure info

- How long have you lived here?
- Why did you move here?
- Do you see your home as a financial investment?
- On a scale of 0-5, how strong would you say the resident democracy is? Control of space?

Do you feel like your part of a community here and in what way? What makes you feel connected?

Do you feel a sense of ownership over the common spaces? How so?

Have you noticed any particular social patterns or group dynamics in common spaces or in governance?

What is the process for bringing an idea for changes to common spaces to reality?

What made you want to get involved in resident democracy?

What types of people tend to get involved and in what aspects?

What do you find motivates people to get involved in different ways?

Is there a "special sauce" that makes a community work well?

Do you feel like this estate affects the neighborhood it's in?

On the whole, how do you feel about living here?

How does it compare to different ways to live?

What do you think about the "ghetto list"?

What do you see as the future of *almene boliger*?

What would you recommend are the best parts of this system to replicate?

Anything else you'd like to tell me about this place that I haven't already asked?

Who else could I talk to?

Roxanne Glick

Valle Scholarship Independent Learning

Copenhagen, Denmark

Fall 2018

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL - Christiania

I'm conducting research on how different ownership models effect people's experience of their home and common spaces.

TOUR:

How do you feel about the spaces?

How do you use the spaces?

How have the spaces come to be the way they are?

Have you made anything in the yard?

ASK:

Housing tenure info

- How long have you lived here?
- Why did you choose to move here?
- How do you feel this housing situation compares to other situations?
- How long do you plan on living here? What's next? Why?
- Do you see your home as a financial investment? Primary?
- How certain are you that you can continue living here as long as you'd like to?

Do you feel like your part of a community here? What makes you feel connected?

Do you feel a sense of ownership over the common spaces? How so?

When there are maintenance and improvements to be made, who initiates them and how does it happen? Do you feel like you are part of the process?

Have you noticed any particular social patterns or group dynamics in common spaces?

How do you think Maelkebotton affects Christiania?

How do you think Christiania affects Copenhagen?

On the whole, how do you feel about living here?

Roxanne Glick  
Thesis  
Winter and Spring 2019

#### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – Othello Square

I'm conducting research on how different ownership models effect people's experience of their home and common spaces.

#### QUESTIONS FOR TONY TO

How do you see the co-op mentality and the community-owned vibe affecting the way the space is designed and used?

How can the campus and programming can address some of the racial inequity and history in the community? Are there ways this is being done through physical design?

What else do you think is important for me to know about how Othello Square is moving from concept to reality?

What should designers working on community-owned projects in Seattle keep in mind?

#### QUESTIONS FOR DAPHNE AND SEAN

##### Basics

How long have you lived here?

Why did you choose to move here?

##### Community in general

Do you feel like you're part of a community here? What makes you feel connected?

Do you feel a sense of ownership of the neighborhood? How so or why not?

Have you noticed any particular social patterns or group dynamics in public or common spaces?

What is your experience as a community leader in the context of the neighborhood?

It's such a diverse neighborhood, what's your experience interacting with cultures different than your own?

What would enable you to interact with people different from your self more if you wanted to?

##### Othello Square

I'm really interested in what you all are planning and thinking about for Othello Square in terms of how the design of the space responds to needs and wants of the communities involved.

What has the planning process been like? Starting with Community Cornerstones and moving into the SEOC and MCC specific planning.

In what ways have you been involved in the design process of the physical space? Internal process versus working with architects. What has been the process?

Overall, how do you feel about how the idea is coming to reality?

Who would you recommend me talk to learn more about how Othello Square is responding to local community needs?