

Mapping Intergenerational Solidarity

Examples of intergenerational solidarity within the field of community-led Housing in Greece, Germany and Denmark



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GREECE

Mapping findings in Greece

Based on the comprehensive mapping document for Thessaloniki and Greece, here are the key findings relevant in the framework of our research project, along with strategic implications:

It emerges that Greece lags significantly behind Northern European countries, where community-led housing initiatives have been an established practice for decades. The main reasons hindering the development of this sector in Greece are deeply rooted in its economic, social, and institutional realities:

A series of socioeconomic and institutional factors contribute to this lag. The historically high rate of homeownership, although declining, has partially addressed the housing problem, reducing the urgent need for alternative solutions. At the same time, the practice of "antiparochi" (property-exchange system) fostered a model of urbanization based on individual ownership at the expense of collective action, making it more difficult to discuss models of cohabitation without individual ownership.

In the structure of the real estate market, the extreme fragmentation of individual ownership and the lack of large, accessible housing stock create a practical barrier, as it makes it extremely difficult to find suitable large spaces for such initiatives. Insufficient support from the state exacerbates the situation. The persistent economic uncertainty for vulnerable population groups, such as the unemployed or precariously employed, increases the risk of participating in such a project, as there is a genuine fear of being unable to meet financial obligations.

Finally, high rates of poverty and significant income inequalities weaken social capital. Widespread disillusionment and aversion towards politics hinder citizen participation in an activity that is inherently political: the creation of a community group to address its housing problem.

In Greece, as in many other countries, the phenomena of gentrification and speculation in real estate markets have dramatic consequences. Residents are faced with evictions from their homes or sharp increases in rents, at a time when the ongoing economic crisis is coupled with the progressive withdrawal of the state from key sectors such as healthcare, education, and housing. The inability of the public sector to effectively address the lack of housing, along with the complete absence of a social housing policy, further burden citizens, who are forced to cover the resulting gaps using their own means.

In response to these challenges, grassroots citizen groups have emerged in recent years seeking alternative solutions. Although they differ in their specific objectives, they share a common foundation: the pursuit of community and the need for mutual support under a shared roof. These initiatives manifest in various forms:

- Projects with a research-oriented focus, whose primary aim is not immediate cohabitation but rather the exploration of new models of living.
- Groups targeting the elderly, promoting mutual aid and companionship to address practical needs (e.g., accompaniment to medical appointments, cooking) that the state no longer covers.
- Groups with a strong political orientation, aiming to withdraw housing from the speculative market and emphasizing intergenerational coexistence.

The diversity of these groups demonstrates the broad range of needs and the dynamism of the grassroots. Despite their differences, all these groups actively seek networking and communication, both among themselves and with organizations within and outside Greece. Through this networking, they aim to educate themselves, share practices, envision solutions, and gain visibility. A notable example of this international collaboration is the connections they have developed with the housing project Projekthaus Potsdam in Germany.

Through these efforts, a collective attempt to develop local responses to systemic problems is emerging, underscoring the need for greater recognition and support from institutional frameworks.

Through the dialogue initiated by these groups and organizations, they are working towards:

- Transferring best practices to Greece from established or emerging international projects, covering legal, technical, financial, and other aspects.
- Seeking funding and developing methodologies for securing capital to implement their initiatives. These funds may come from national and European programs or from solidarity-based initiatives abroad.
- Organizing online or in-person meetings and presenting their projects to citizen groups expressing interest.
- Forming study groups to adapt international practices to the Greek context.
- Organizing seminars and events across Greece with invited citizens, citizen groups, cooperative enterprises, housing organizations, public entities, and financial institutions.
- Communicating with state entities to disseminate best practices.
- Advocating and applying pressure on the State to adopt corresponding support measures and establish appropriate institutional frameworks.
- Exploring the creation of groups to identify relevant resources (financial support, buildings, plots of land, human capital with technical, legal, accounting expertise, etc.) to initiate community-led housing projects in Greece as well.

The Relationship Between Community-Led Housing and Social Housing Programs

As already noted, community-led housing in Greece is still at an early, formative stage. Several municipal initiatives focus on social housing, which shares significant characteristics with community-led housing—such as effective practices in supporting vulnerable populations. Furthermore, individuals and organizations engaged in social housing have developed valuable expertise, ranging from the technical skills required for renovating homes to the ability to access relevant funding sources. This knowledge base could prove extremely beneficial for community-led housing initiatives. Finally, the human capital within organizations working on social housing has demonstrated interest in community-led housing, motivated by the goal of addressing the social need for housing outside the exploitative framework that treats housing primarily as a commodity.

Challenges and Prospects

It appears that the primary obstacle to the development of community-led housing in Greece is the complete lack of a clear legal, fiscal, and financial framework on the part of the state.

Specifically, there is no established legal form tailored to this type of community initiative. The absence of a specialized cooperative law that would simplify processes and legally recognize community-led housing creates a significant gap. This deprives groups of the opportunity to claim part of the unused housing stock or to proceed with property purchases aimed at creating social housing.

The issue of funding is equally problematic. Without a legally recognized entity, these initiatives cannot access formal funding. While ethical banks exist in Greece, and initial communication channels between communities and such institutions have been established, this remains insufficient.

The state seems disengaged from this sector, leaving the burden of mobilization to civil society itself. Efforts must focus on opening a sustained dialogue with the state to propose solutions and advocate for the development of necessary institutional frameworks.

Consequently, it seems that a significant period of maturation will still be required before the first pilot community-led housing project can be realized in Greece.

A. Practical Community-Led Housing Initiatives

Thessaloniki Solidarity Co-Housing Initiative

Reimagine Collective Living: Founded in 2023, this diverse group explores new forms of co-habitation to counter rising living costs and social isolation. Guided by equality, solidarity, and direct democracy, members experiment with various models of shared housing while maintaining personal choice and autonomy.

Pervolarides of Thessaloniki

Cultivate Solidarity Through Food: Active since 2013, Pervolarides form a living network of mutual aid rooted in the food cycle—from cultivation to redistribution. They empower those facing exclusion while connecting with European community-led housing initiatives through Erasmus+ programs on engagement and intergenerational solidarity.

Cohabitation of Friends 60+ & 60– (Thessaloniki)

Redefine Aging Collectively: This grassroots movement, now a national association, creates dignified, supportive living environments for older adults. Through weekly “cohabitation rehearsals” and advocacy for adaptive reuse of public buildings, it promotes autonomy, reciprocity, and active aging within community networks.

Self-Managed Co-Housing Community of Active Adults 60+ (Ioannina)

Build Cooperative Futures for Seniors: Emerging from workshops led by the Solidarity Counseling Network and “High Mountains,” this initiative mobilizes residents to establish a cooperative co-housing model for active adults. It draws on international best practices to foster self-management, shared services, and dignified living in later life.

Co-Living Community “NAMA” (Athens)

Inspire Joyful Togetherness: Founded in 2023, NAMA develops self-organized housing communities for older adults. It champions affordable, dignified living through collective adaptation of buildings, creative companionship, and public dialogue on aging and quality of life.

CoHab Athens (Urban Habitat in Common)

Claim Housing as a Right: Since 2016, CoHab Athens connects researchers, activists, and citizens to explore cooperative housing and collective ownership. Through participatory design, policy proposals, and tools like the CoHab Toolkit, it fosters public understanding of cohousing and international exchange on urban commons.

B. Research & University Networks / Programs

National Technical University of Athens (NTUA)

Advance Research on Collective Living: The Department of Urban and Regional Planning conducts student and doctoral research on commons and collaborative housing, participating in projects such as RE-HOUSING and URBACT.

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH)

Bridge Academia and Practice: The Departments of Architecture and Spatial Planning study urban commons and community life, collaborating with grassroots initiatives like Pervolarides and CoHab.

Panteion University – Department of Social Policy

Ground Housing in Social Theory: Focuses on research and conceptual frameworks for the commons and social housing, providing academic support for emerging community-led models.

C. Municipal, Regional, and Other Authorities

Major Development Agency Thessaloniki (MDAT S.A.)

Support Social Innovation in Housing: As a metropolitan development body, MDAT provides technical and managerial support for public and inter-municipal projects. It implements EU-funded programs like Co-housilience and Cities 4 Co-housing, fostering inclusion, affordability, and community resilience across Europe.

EATA S.A. – Development Agency of the Municipality of Athens

Pilot New Housing Pathways: EATA designs programs on Housing First, social housing, and reintegration, and participates in URBACT – Co4Housing to promote cooperative housing approaches.

Municipality of Agios Dimitrios

Integrate Cooperative Housing Locally: Engaged in URBACT – Co4Housing, the municipality develops a local action plan to promote collective housing as part of its social policy framework.

Mobilize Resources for Social Housing: Partners with national and EU programs (NSRF, National Strategy) to finance inclusive and community-oriented housing initiatives.

Heinrich Böll Foundation

Empower Knowledge and Advocacy: Supports groups and researchers advancing the discourse on community-led housing, offering resources and visibility for transformative housing models in Greece.



GERMANY

Mapping findings in Germany

Introduction remarks

Germany has a long and rich tradition of various community-led housing projects, with very diverse social and political backgrounds and goals, concepts, models and legal forms. Best known are housing Cooperatives (Wohngenossenschaften or Bauwohngenossenschaften), whose roots go back to the cooperative movement of the late 19th and early 20th century, and which play a relevant role on the housing market still today. Even more, there is a certain trend of „renaissance“ of cooperatives, which are being re-discovered by the wider public, especially since the ever broader parts of the population starts directly to experience various negative effects of the housing and energy crises. According to the official statistics, in 2020 there were 1944 cooperatives of this type, with more than 2,9 million members and 2,2 million housing units in their stock¹.

Apart from cooperatives, there are other forms of community-led housing, which vary in every possible sense. Among all, the network of Mietshäuser Syndikat (MHS)² is the best known: Although small in absolute numbers (200 projects with ca. 6000 inhabitants), this specific model had a quite immense social-political empowering effects in the course of last 35 years, raising awareness about relevance of self-organization and self-help concepts. And this is not the only network of such kind in Germany. Despite all of their varieties, community-led housing projects were mainly founded to respond to a specific set of demands, such as long-term affordable housing, sustainable and more communal (community-oriented) forms of living, social solidarity (across generations, genders and other social groups and clusters) and (sometimes) social-political empowerment. Intergenerational solidarity is one of the basic elements of this wide set of demands and needs.

The mapping which we conducted had far modest goals than to provide very extensive findings from this field. Namely, our mapping had a research of various internet sources as a starting point to initially identify couple of dozens diverse examples, which distinguish themselves by their reflection on intergenerational living i.e. which goes beyond purely declarative level. We were solely focused on a housing models which are based on self-organization, mutual aid and joining of resources, and describe themselves as collaborative, communal, community-

1 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/72874/umfrage/wohnungsgenossenschaften-in-deutschland-seit-2005/>

2 <https://www.syndikat.org/en/>

based or community-centered, and didn't take in consideration neither purely commercial projects, nor those embeded within the model of (ever more crumbling) welfare-state care. By further reduction we singled out 10 of them, which in our opinion could exemplary stand for the whole variety of the community-led housing projects, because of their diverse typology (urban, semi-urban and rural) and geographical distribution, variety of their legal forms, goals, concepts, purposes and sizes, as well as their dedication to a topic of an intergenerational solidarity and variety of devised solutions. Within the mapping processs, we developed a questionnaire in attempt to make a survey and summarize their diversity in a form which would enable us to compare them, and although only 5 of 10 projects have responded to it, results of our survey have provided us enough material for our analysis. Furthermore, we visited 3 of those 10 selected examples and conducted observations and short interviews with some of their inhabitants and responsible persons.

We are fully aware that obtained findings do not provide representative material for a proper scientific study, but our goal was rather to enable valuable insights into this indeed exciting and widely not very well known field, as well as to map some of the concepts and solutions, analyse and compare them, and „translate“ and incorporate in such way gained findings into a workshop model which could be applied as an educational tool by various stakeholders in diverse settings, with or without previous knowledge from this field.

Case-studies

No.	Name	Location	Established:	Inhabitants	Type	Legal Form	Housing or mixed type	Type of mixed use	Intergen Concept	Web Page
1	Projekthaus	Potsdam	2005	32	Suburban	LLC, property owner	Mixed	Edu, Cult, Soz	partially	https://www.projekthaus-potsdam.de/
2	Wagenhausburg	Potsdam	2003	20	Suburban	Association / long-term lease	Mixed	soz	partially	https://wagenhausburg.org/
3	Regenbogenfabrik	Berlin	1981	34	Urban	Association / long-term lease	Mixed	Edu, Cult, Soz	partially	https://regenbogenfabrik.de/
4	Stadtgut Blankenfelde	Berlin	2004	100	Suburban	Association / long-term lease	Mixed	Edu, Cult, Soz	yes, developed	https://stadtgut-blankenfelde.de/
5	Sonnenwald	Baden-Wurtemberg	2019	90	R: Eco-village	Cooperative	Mixed	Agri, Edu, Cult	yes, developed	https://sonnenwald.org/
6	Kirnhalden	Baden-Wurtemberg	2021	50	R: Eco-village	Cooperative	Mixed	Agri, Edu, Cult	Yes, developed	https://www.kirnhalden.de/
7	Sieben Linden	Sachsen-Anhalt	1997	150	R: Eco-village	Cooperative	Mixed	Agri, Edu, Cult	Yes, developed	https://siebenlinden.org
8	Mittendrin Leben e.G.	Niedersachsen	2015	35	R: Eco-village	Cooperative / long-term lease	mixed	Agri, Edu, Soz	partially	http://www.gemeinschaft-mittendrin-leben.de
9	Alte Schule Karlishorst	Berlin	2007	35	Suburban	Cooperative / long-term lease	Mixed	Edu, Soz	yes, developed	https://www.cohousing-berlin.de/projekte/alt/
10	Schönerhausen Leipzig	Sachsen	2014	80	Urban	Association / long-term lease	Housing	soz	yes, developed	https://schonerhausen.org/

Out of 10 surveyed projects, 5 are based in the region of Berlin-Brandenburg (3 in Berlin and 2 in Potsdam), 2 in the province of Baden-Württemberg, and 3 in other regions, both in east and west of the country. Four of those are rural housing projects (Eco-villages), four could be identified as semi-urban and two as projects based in urban areas. Six of them are mid-size projects (20-50 inhabitants), four are larger (more than 50 inhabitants). Most of them were established in the time-frame between 2003 and 2015, two had a bit longer history (since 1980s and 1990s), and two of them are fairly new projects (established 2019 and 2021). Concerning their legal forms, 3 of them are cooperatives, one has a form of LLC (as it is common for MHS model), and those four are also owners of their property. Other 6 projects are either cooperatives or associations, but all of them with a long-term lease model of the property use (for various time-frames), one of which is also member of the MHS network.

Nine of ten surveyed projects could be identified as mixed-use structures - their activities go beyond housing only and their spaces are partially only for a private use, and partially open to a public access - but also the one rest project has ambition to develop additional content/spaces for other-than-housing use and become itself a mixed-use structure. This is probably one of the most interesting findings of our Mapping: Community-led housing projects almost always go beyond just housing and develop additional spaces and diverse activities in social-cultural and educational field. Those could be various activities and grassroots social services, such as repair workshops, common cooking and gardening, or common working days/weeks (focused mainly on construction/repair of the infrastructure), as well as management of their own kindergartens, schools and even elderly homes. Cultural and educational activities encompass various public discussions, lectures, workshops, diverse courses, exhibitions, camps, celebrations and festivals. Rural housing projects (by default) develop activities related to a food-production (food-growth, bakeries, kitchens), which often lead to development of various small businesses as a result, such as shops, cafes, restaurants, catering services etc. Such activities in most of the cases enable these projects to create certain number of working positions, both for members of their community and external persons, which makes the diverse bonds in and around the housing community more complex.

Most of the projects are genuinely committed to practicing various forms of sustainable living, especially food and energy subsistence, and often there are diverse models of circular economy being explored or implemented, such as recycling and upcycling of various goods, common food preparation, ecological waste-management, as well as resource-sharing (tools and car-sharing concepts etc). Main reason for this rich variety of activities and endeavours is the fact, that the communal living goes beyond housing and inevitably includes other aspects and layers of life, because community does revolve around housing, as its main point, but it can't be reduced to it. Additionally, by being somewhat shielded from the overall market-induced pressure related to the housing, stakeholders could look and go beyond just a survival-mode and assign their time and efforts to other relevant and enriching activities as well.

Intergenerational solidarity

Six of ten surveyed housing projects have fairly developed concepts of intergenerational living and solidarity: There are very specific references to them in their basic documents and/or reflection on them have had a significant role already in earliest phase of their development i.e. while projects were being planned; in other words, they have been designed as intergenerational housing projects. The other four refer to intergenerational solidarity rather in somewhat broader terms and they included/developed these concepts and/or different solutions in the course of time („along the way“). Additionally, one of them refers to a specific type of social solidarity (focused on LGBTQI community) as well.

Although devised solutions vary pretty much, there are certain overlappings and repeating patterns – in other words, solutions have a tendency to be very similar and repeat across the board. What distinguishes solutions among them the most, is a certain relevance assigned to them by each of the housing projects, which also determines the intensity of effort in their pursuit and the grade of their implementation. For example, shared responsibility and solidarity in the field of child care could range from fairly simple support of parents in certain time-frames (during assemblies and meetings, or in specific time-frames of a day), to a fully organized grassroots system for a child care. These solutions depend from a model one housing project stands for, as well as from the internal dynamics of the groups which inhabit them, but also vary from specific situations and conditions of each project, as well as of capacities and resources of both single members and the group as a whole. Additionally, it is possible to observe how all solutions tend to transform over time, adapt to changed circumstances, resources, interests and needs. Overall, it is one very dynamic phenomenon indeed and we have managed to observe only one moment in its development.

Mixed-age Housing as a choice

Intergenerational housing needs to be conscious choice and perceived as such, so that common generational bias (such as young people prefer young ones, middle-age members tend to pick rather middle-aged people etc.) could be reflected and avoided, especially within selection process of inhabitants for housing projects or re-distribution of the space.

Spatial design

Overall, spatial morphology defines the group dynamics, which is why spatial design plays such an important role. In this sense crucial are well designed shared common spaces and meeting points, such as shared kitchens, dining and living rooms, gardens, children playgrounds, terraces (patios), pathways, arcades (access galleries) and similar spaces, which enable regular and casual contacts between inhabitants and various forms of socializing. In such a way regular meetings and exchanges among inhabitants become possible, and they by default enable building and strengthening of interpersonal relationships, social bonds, empathy, mutual support and diverse forms of group solidarity, which are all elements of a real communal living.

Second, but not less relevant layer to the spatial design are the issues of accessibility and inclusion, such as building of ground-floor habitation units, ramps, lifts and elevators, removal of various physical obstacles, design of accessible building-doors and toilets. All of those solutions enable children and elderly, as well as physically disabled people easier movement across the project spaces, better access to common areas and easier contacts with other inhabitants.

Collaborative governance

Solutions within the field of collaborative governance are among the crucial ones, because they are practical expressions of a specific model and determine the group dynamics for the most part. Shared responsibilities, such as participatory governance and decision-making models, transparent communication, shared management (administration and finances) and maintenance of the space, enables the highest possible level of inclusion of all inhabitants, despite various gaps in regard to knowledge, skills and experiences, especially in those cases where members of different generations are more knowledgeable, skilled and experienced than others. Even more, collaborative governance enables sharing of know-how between generations and social groups, and such knowledge and skill sharing has a very empowering effect, but also functions as a way to build and strengthen social bonds. Because it opens a possibility for various forms of informal mentoring, counseling and intergenerational storytelling: they function in various directions, not just as elderly members counseling or mentoring the younger ones, but also the other way round, especially in terms of getting elderly generations acquainted with newest technological development.

One specific solution for an intergenerational solidarity in the field of collaborative governance are shared financial responsibilities, where financial participation is shared among inhabitants according to their financial capabilities. In such a manner wealthier members of a community could carry larger financial burdens (rents, living costs etc.) and de facto subsidize the financially weaker members. Such an financial solidarity could have a form where elderly members with a certain amount of accumulated wealth support younger members and young families, or the opposite, where younger „higher earners“ support financially weaker elderly or larger families, but also any other scenario is easy to imagine¹. Such redistributions of wealth in various communities are mostly based on a voluntary principle, self-assessment and so-called „bidding rounds“, where inhabitants themselves decide annually about the level of their financial participation. Even though it may look, such models of financial solidarity are „programmed to fail“, longevity of various examples shows there are fully operational and sustainable solutions. Most importantly, their purpose is to enable long-term affordability of the housing space for people from various social groups, classes, generations and of diverse backgrounds, and indeed provide the ground for a good social mixture of their inhabitants.

Social welfare and wellbeing

One common form of intergenerational solidarity is communally organized social welfare system, such as shared child-care, care for elderly, and support of ill and disabled.

³ Description of one such example could be found on the web page of the Eco-Village SiebenLinden: <https://siebenlinden.org/de/oekodorf-sieben-linden/oekonomie/solidarstrukturen/>

Care work can be shared in such a way to support families and single parents by taking the responsibility for children in certain time-frames in the course of a working day, and/or over weekends, and/or during meetings and assemblies. Often are such solutions initiated and practiced by individual parents themselves, but in most of the surveyed groups it is perceived as a group responsibility. Some of them went even a step beyond and established their own professionally managed daily child-care programmes, or even their own kindergardens. Somewhat less developed, but ever more present is the topic of care for elderly. Some of these projectes have developed certain solutions, such as shared care-appartments for older and dissabled inhabitants, where care-work is both voluntary and professionally done by inhabitants themselves, or managed in a collaboration with external care-services and agencies.

Specific forms of social wellbeing directly connected with collaborative housing projects are social engagement and voluntary work. Diverse typology of common spaces (meeting rooms, kitchens, info-cafes, gardens etc.) creates possibilities for various activities in the field of social engagement, such as food reclamation, repair workshops, organized support for refugees and homeless etc. These activities enable additional social contacts of housing projects with their neighborhoods and wider social networking in their local communities, which often further generate diverse synergy effects, such as knowledge and skill sharing within community, empowerment, development of common projects and many more. Sometimes they serve as starting points even for development of small businesses and social enterprises, as many examples prove it. In such a way one housing project becomes permanently embeded within the local community and presents one of the corner stones of its social ecology.



DENMARK

Mapping findings in Denmark

Definition of Intergenerational Solidarity in Housing cooperatives

Intergenerational solidarity refers to the mutual support, respect, and cooperation between different generations, particularly in terms of sharing resources, knowledge, and responsibilities. In the context of housing cooperatives, it focuses on fostering a sense of connection and interdependence between younger and older generations, allowing them to live and interact in a way that benefits all members of the community, regardless of age.

In housing cooperatives, this solidarity may manifest in various forms, such as:

- **Shared Responsibilities:** Residents of different age groups share in the maintenance and management of the cooperative, with older generations offering experience and younger ones bringing fresh ideas.
- **Social and Emotional Support:** Older members may provide mentorship or emotional support to younger residents, while younger people might help with physical tasks or provide technological expertise.
- **Knowledge Exchange:** Older members share life experiences, wisdom, and historical perspectives, while younger members contribute with new knowledge, energy, and perspectives on modern issues.
- **Economic Support:** Some housing cooperatives may adopt economic structures where wealthier, older members contribute more financially to ensure affordable living for younger, less established residents.

Intergenerational Solidarity in Housing Cooperatives in Denmark

Denmark has a long tradition of housing cooperatives (or andelsboliger), which are collectively owned and managed housing units. These cooperatives are particularly focused on community-oriented living, and the concept of intergenerational solidarity fits well within this framework.

1. Designing Inclusive Communities: Danish housing cooperatives have been experimenting with intergenerational living arrangements. In many cases, the physical design of these housing communities encourages social interaction between generations. Shared spaces, communal gardens, and common rooms foster natural opportunities for younger and older residents to interact and share experiences.

2. Cooperative Governance: In some Danish cooperatives, the governance model promotes inclusivity across generations. All residents, regardless of age, often have a voice in decision-making processes. This can create a sense of shared responsibility and ownership, where people of different ages collaborate to improve their living environment.

3. Social Programs and Initiatives: Some housing cooperatives in Denmark have established initiatives that explicitly promote intergenerational exchange, such as:

- **Mentorship programs:** Older residents might serve as mentors to younger residents, particularly in terms of life skills, financial management, or other practical aspects.
- **Intergenerational events:** Shared meals, workshops, or joint celebrations that involve different generations can strengthen the bonds between people of all ages.

4. Economic Structures Supporting Solidarity: Denmark's housing cooperative model often incorporates mechanisms that allow for intergenerational economic solidarity. For example, older residents who have built up more wealth may choose to subsidize housing costs for younger residents, ensuring that the cooperative remains affordable and inclusive.

5. Living in a Mixed-Age Environment: A number of housing cooperatives in Denmark have focused on creating mixed-age environments where both young people (students, young families) and older people (retirees, people seeking downsize options) live together. These mixed-age communities can generate natural intergenerational exchange. For example, retirees may have more time for community involvement, while younger residents might bring different skills and enthusiasm.

Key Features of Intergenerational Solidarity in Danish Housing Cooperatives

- **Social Activities:** Many housing cooperatives offer activities that engage residents of all ages. These might include cooking classes, gardening projects, communal work days, or social events like movie nights, which give different generations the chance to mingle and bond.
- **Conflict Resolution:** In some cooperatives, older residents with more experience in community living often play the role of mediators when conflicts arise between generations, ensuring that differences are resolved respectfully and constructively.

Sustainable Living: Many cooperatives in Denmark, including those with intergenerational solidarity programs, emphasize sustainable living.

This includes not only eco-friendly practices but also fostering long-term intergenerational relationships that ensure that the cooperative remains a resilient, supportive, and evolving community.

- **Shared Resources:** Some housing cooperatives organize shared resource programs, such as tool-sharing, vehicle-sharing, or collective buying of food and goods. These resources are often shared between generations, allowing for a more sustainable and cooperative approach to daily life.

Challenges to Intergenerational Solidarity in Danish Housing Cooperatives

While Denmark has made significant steps in creating inclusive, intergenerational communities within housing cooperatives, challenges still exist:

- **1. Generational Divides:** Age differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or lack of common ground, especially if different generations have varying lifestyles, needs, or cultural experiences.
- **2. Generational Gaps:** Even in cooperative environments, there can still be gaps in understanding between different generations. For instance, older residents may struggle to relate to the fast-paced digital culture of younger residents, and vice versa. Overcoming these gaps requires patience, openness, and a willingness to learn from each other.
- **3. Affordability:** Maintaining affordability while fostering intergenerational solidarity can be difficult, especially in urban areas where property values are rising. Some housing cooperatives face financial pressure that can make it harder to offer affordable options for younger residents, putting the intergenerational balance at risk.
- **4. Sustainability:** As the demographic balance shifts, especially with an aging population, some housing cooperatives may struggle with ensuring that there is an equitable balance of different age groups. There may be fewer younger people to share in the management responsibilities or contribute to the cooperative's economic structure.
- **5. Economic Pressures:** Housing cooperatives that focus on maintaining affordability for all generations can face financial challenges, particularly if younger residents cannot afford to contribute to the maintenance of the cooperative.
- **6. Aging Population:** As Denmark's population continues to age, there may be an increasing demand for housing models that support aging in place. Cooperatives that have successfully integrated intergenerational solidarity will need to adapt to ensure they are supportive of older residents as they age.

Specific Examples of Intergenerational Solidarity in Danish Housing Cooperatives

1. Fælledby, Copenhagen

Fælledby is a pioneering urban housing project in Copenhagen that combines sustainable living with a strong focus on community. The project is designed to foster interaction between generations, and here's how they've approached it:

- **Mixed-age Housing Units:** The community includes both young families and retirees, ensuring that there is a cross-section of ages. The idea is that people of different age groups can support each other, from babysitting to offering advice and companionship.
- **Shared Communal Spaces:** The layout of the community emphasizes shared spaces such as communal kitchens, living areas, and gardens. These spaces are designed to encourage spontaneous interaction between people of all ages.
- **Cooperative Governance:** Decisions about the cooperative are made collectively, with equal input from all generations. There is an emphasis on participatory decision-making, ensuring that both older residents with experience and younger residents with new ideas contribute equally.
- **Sustainability and Future Focus:** The project prioritizes environmental sustainability, but it also emphasizes intergenerational sustainability — creating a model that future generations can continue to thrive in. The project addresses the needs of older residents (for instance, making homes accessible) while providing affordable living for younger residents.

2. Andelsboliger in Aarhus: Mixed-Age Communities

In Aarhus, one of Denmark's largest cities, there are several examples of Andelsboliger (cooperative housing) where intergenerational solidarity is a key focus:

- **Living Together and Supporting One Another:** Some of these Andelsboliger have structures that allow for various age groups to live together. Younger residents (often students or young professionals) share living spaces with older residents, creating an environment of mutual support. For example, students may help older residents with tech-related issues (e.g., smartphones or online banking), while older residents can provide emotional support or offer guidance in navigating life challenges.
- **Community Workshops and Skill Sharing:** These cooperatives often organize workshops that are open to all generations. Older members might run workshops on cooking, knitting, or local history, while younger members may lead sessions on technology, sustainability, or modern art.

These activities help bridge the gap between generations and allow people to share knowledge, thus enhancing social cohesion.

- **Shared Financial Responsibility:** One key feature of Andelsboliger is the shared financial model, which allows wealthier residents (often older, with more financial stability) to subsidize rent for younger, less financially established residents. This keeps the community affordable for all generations, even as the cost of living continues to rise in urban areas.

3. BoGruppe, Copenhagen

BoGruppe is another example of a Danish cooperative that embodies intergenerational solidarity, particularly in its approach to social sustainability:

- **Generational Mentoring:** In this cooperative, older residents actively participate in mentoring younger residents. Whether it's life advice, help navigating the housing market, or assistance in understanding local community politics, these older residents play a critical role in helping younger people settle into the cooperative and the city.
- **Health and Social Support:** The cooperative has also developed a social program to address the health needs of its older residents. Younger residents help organize medical check-ups, group exercise sessions, and social events to ensure that all members are engaged and cared for. At the same time, older residents contribute to the well-being of the younger residents by offering support in times of stress, mental health struggles, or major life changes.
- **Intergenerational Cultural Events:** The cooperative regularly hosts cultural events, such as a "Midsummer Festival" or a "Winter Craft Fair," where both young and old residents share in traditions and create new ones together. These events provide a natural way for people from different age groups to bond and exchange cultural experiences.

4. Vesterbro Housing Cooperative, Copenhagen

The Vesterbro Housing Cooperative, located in a vibrant neighborhood of Copenhagen, is another model of intergenerational solidarity:

- **Physical Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Many of the units in the cooperative are designed to be easily adaptable for people with mobility issues, ensuring that elderly residents can age in place. The cooperative also hosts various "open door" days where residents are invited to showcase their homes and interact with each other across age groups.
- **Cultural and Social Integration:** Vesterbro integrates various cultural events where different generations come together to showcase their talents, such as art exhibitions, music performances, and storytelling sessions. These events are designed to encourage older residents to engage with younger ones,

promoting dialogue, cultural exchange, and social bonding.

- **Youth Involvement in Decision-Making:** Young people are actively involved in the governance of the cooperative, helping to shape the rules and the future of the community. There is a recognition that young people bring fresh perspectives, and their involvement ensures that the cooperative remains dynamic and relevant for future generations.

5. Sydhavnen Housing Cooperative, Copenhagen

The Sydhavnen area in Copenhagen has seen a rise in mixed-age housing communities where intergenerational solidarity is a central tenet. This cooperative is noteworthy for its strong commitment to community integration across generations.

- **Inclusive Housing Design:** The cooperative's architecture is designed to encourage interaction between generations. For example, units are mixed-use, with shared spaces such as communal kitchens and lounges where people from different age groups naturally interact.
- **Elderly Care and Assistance:** In this cooperative, older residents are given access to assistance programs where younger residents volunteer to help with household chores, shopping, or tech support. This allows elderly residents to stay independent longer while maintaining a strong sense of connection to their neighbors.
- **Intergenerational Work Initiatives:** Sydhavnen has developed a cooperative business model that encourages residents of all ages to participate in local enterprises, from small businesses to social enterprises. Older residents with entrepreneurial experience mentor younger ones, creating new job opportunities and strengthening community bonds.

6. Solvang Cooperative, Aarhus

Solvang is a cooperative housing project in Aarhus that has specifically embraced the concept of "intergenerational living" in its design and activities.

- **Workshops and Shared Learning:** Solvang offers regular workshops where older residents teach younger ones various life skills such as gardening, cooking, or handcrafts. Similarly, younger residents offer technology-based learning sessions, such as introducing older residents to smartphones, computers, and online services. These skill-sharing initiatives help bridge the digital divide and ensure that both generations are learning from each other.
- **Sustainability as a Shared Goal:** Many of Solvang's residents—both young and old—work together on eco-friendly initiatives. These include joint urban gardening projects, where older residents offer wisdom on traditional farming techniques, while younger members contribute to building sustainable food

systems, like vertical farming or composting. This collaborative effort promotes environmental sustainability and encourages long-term thinking across generations.

- **Shared Housing and Family Support:** One notable feature of Solvang is that several families live together under one roof with shared common areas. These shared spaces allow for mutual assistance, whether it's babysitting, helping elderly parents with mobility challenges, or offering childcare support. The cooperative encourages families to live communally and create "family units" that span multiple generations, strengthening the social fabric.

7. Samarbejdsbyen (Cooperative City), Odense

Samarbejdsbyen in Odense is a citywide cooperative initiative that brings together different types of housing projects, with a strong emphasis on intergenerational living. It's a community-first cooperative where mutual support and solidarity are integral to its design.

- **Generations Living Side by Side:** Samarbejdsbyen offers different types of housing, including units for students, young families, and retirees. The mixed-age demographic promotes interaction through shared spaces like cafes, common gardens, and workspaces. Students, for instance, may help retirees with errands, while retirees offer emotional support and life advice to young parents or students.
- **Cultural Programming Across Generations:** The cooperative hosts regular intergenerational cultural nights, where older residents share stories from their past, teach traditional crafts or cooking recipes, while younger generations perform music, theater, or modern dance. These events strengthen the sense of community and allow for the celebration of both the past and present in a shared space.
- **Local Projects and Volunteerism:** Samarbejdsbyen also focuses on local community development projects. Residents of all ages volunteer for neighborhood clean-ups, community gardens, and charity events. These initiatives help reinforce the idea of solidarity across generations, ensuring that no group is isolated and that everyone contributes to the well-being of the collective.

8. Ramsø Housing Cooperative, Roskilde

Ramsø Cooperative in Roskilde is another example of a successful intergenerational model, specifically designed to foster long-term, multigenerational relationships among its residents.

- **Multigenerational Housing Units:** Ramsø incorporates multigenerational housing units, where families of different ages (both with and without children) live together in larger shared apartments or buildings. These units have smaller individual living spaces but emphasize collective areas where neighbors interact, such as kitchens, lounges, and recreation rooms.
- **Youth Mentorship Programs:** In Ramsø, older residents frequently act as mentors to younger residents, especially those who are new to cooperative living or struggling with life transitions, such as starting university or entering the workforce. These older residents often provide valuable advice, guidance, and emotional support.
- **Health & Wellness Programs for All Ages:** Ramsø also offers programs that encourage physical well-being for all generations. These include yoga, joint exercise sessions, and outdoor fitness initiatives. These activities ensure that everyone, regardless of age, stays healthy and maintains a sense of belonging within the community.

9. Skovgårdsparken, Vejle

Skovgårdsparken is an innovative cooperative housing project in the small town of Vejle, which combines sustainable design with a focus on intergenerational living. It's designed to bring together people of all ages to create a harmonious, cooperative living environment.

- **Designing for Interaction:** The layout of Skovgårdsparken is purposefully designed to encourage social interaction. Communal kitchens, shared gardens, and common rooms are centrally located, so people of different ages naturally cross paths on a regular basis.
- **Collaborative Gardening Projects:** Skovgårdsparken has an extensive garden program, which is open to all residents, whether young or old. Younger residents, often families with children, work together with older residents to manage vegetable plots, maintain flower beds, and plan seasonal activities. These gardening efforts not only improve the environment but also offer a chance for residents of different ages to share their skills and stories.
- **Cultural and Creative Collaboration:** An important feature of Skovgårdsparken is its emphasis on intergenerational cultural collaboration. Monthly art events bring together older and younger residents to create visual art, poetry, or music. The residents work as a team to create murals, sculptures, or performances that reflect the community's shared values and experiences.

10. The Old Town Cooperative (Den Gamle By), Aarhus

In Aarhus, the Old Town Cooperative (Den Gamle By) is a historic cooperative that mixes the old with the new. It's a living museum that serves as both a housing cooperative and an interactive space that celebrates Denmark's cultural heritage.

- **Intergenerational Storytelling:** Residents in Den Gamle By regularly engage in intergenerational storytelling, where older residents, many of whom have lived in the town for decades, share their personal histories and local knowledge. These stories are passed down to younger generations, ensuring that local traditions and experiences are preserved.
- **Crafts and Skills Preservation:** Residents—especially those in their later years—teach younger generations traditional Danish crafts like weaving, woodworking, and metalworking. These skills are passed down in hands-on workshops, where families from different generations can work together on creating handmade items.
- **Social Integration Across Ages:** As part of the community's social programming, residents participate in age-diverse teams that work together on restoring historical buildings or preserving the town's artifacts. These projects bring people of all ages together with a shared sense of purpose, strengthening social bonds across generations.

Recurring Themes:

These examples from Denmark show that intergenerational solidarity in housing cooperatives can take many forms, whether through shared governance, cultural programming, volunteering, mentorship, or common living spaces. Here are some recurring themes across these examples:

- **Shared Spaces:** Common areas like kitchens, gardens, lounges, and community rooms are often designed to foster interaction between generations. These spaces are central to creating a sense of belonging and collaboration.
- **Mentorship and Knowledge Sharing:** Older residents often serve as mentors, sharing wisdom and experiences, while younger residents bring fresh perspectives and energy. This mutual exchange strengthens social cohesion.
- **Sustainability:** Many of these cooperatives emphasize sustainability, both in terms of environmental practices and fostering long-term relationships that transcend generations.
- **Cultural and Social Activities:** Intergenerational activities—like workshops, cultural festivals, gardening, and arts—play a significant role in creating connections between residents of different ages, helping to build a strong, supportive community.

Text **Mapping Intergenerational Solidarity** is an outcome of the Project "Intergenerational Solidarity and Community-led Housing" co-funded by the **EU Programme Erasmus+**. The Project is implemented by Organizations **Inwole** (Potsdam, Germany), **Pervolarides** (Thessaloniki, Greece) and **Ethos NGO** (Odense, Denmark) from October 2024 until December 2025.

Mapping Intergenerational Solidarity

1st Edition: December 2025

Editor: Petar Atanackovic

Layout: Roberta Lucchi

Publisher: Inwole e.V. Potsdam,
Germany

<https://www.inwole.de/>



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**Kofinanziert von der
Europäischen Union**

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