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Experiences from an emerging trend

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Developer-driven co-housing in Denmark: Experiences from an emerging trend

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Abstract

In recent years an increasing number of commercial housing developers have started to deliver pre-designed co-housing settlements in the Danish market for co-housing. We estimate that around 30% of new-built co-housing units in Denmark today is established by private developers and might increase further in the coming years. This development has contributed to a strong growth of co-housing in Denmark over the last 2-3 years. Although the group of developers is quite heterogenous, the top-down approach represents a large change compared to the predominant bottom-up process, for instance a shorter planning process, reduced risks for the residents, but also less involvement of the residents in the planning and design stages. Several co-housing concepts are designed as turn-key projects, aiming for a broader audience compared to traditional co-housing, with limited involvement in design decisions, activities based on voluntary participation, and a physical design that supports and promotes spontaneous meetings amongst neighbors. A main question is how the limited involvement will influence the operation stage where the residents will be developing the community by sharing facilities and meals, making joint decisions etc. Based on interviews with developers, facilitators and residents, our findings suggests that residents generally welcome the main features of the developer-driven co-housing, but also that some features need further attention and development, including the facilitation of the community, the organizational structure, as well as decision-making on operational issues between residents and owner. In short, top-down approaches need facilitation of the community. Developer-driven co-housing has a large potential for meeting an apparently huge demand on co-housing, but also represents a large experiment with the co-housing idea, that needs continued attention.

Keywords: Co-housing, developers, Denmark, residents, facilitation.

Introduction

Recent years development in Denmark has shown a dramatic increase in developer-led co-housing. In developer-led co-housing a developer takes the initiative to establish co-housing, typically with only little or no involvement of the future residents before moving in. This include defining the concept of the co-housing settlement (e.g. number of dwellings, size of dwellings, type of shared facilities and green areas), buying of the land, financing and building the settlement, mobilizing future residents, setting up the organizational framework for sharing and collaborating amongst residents after moving in). This is a big contrast to “traditional” resident-led cohousing where residents take the initiative to form the co-housing settlement, the houses, the shared facilities, and to identify the values and principles of sharing in the co-housing. This model has been the dominant in Danish co-housing so far, and in other countries as well. This is a big change, as co-housing in Denmark has traditionally been established with a resident-driven approach, where a group of residents takes the initiative to establish a co-housing settlement. A recent mapping of Danish co-housing (Jensen et al, 2022a) shows that the new-established developer-led co-housing in 2020 and 2021 represented around 30% of the co-housing market, and that the share is likely to grow in the coming years, judged by the number of developer-led co-housing settlements in pipeline.

On the one hand, this is good news for the supply of co-housing. Studies have shown that there is a great demand for co-housing in the Danish population, which exceeds the current supply; according to a

survey, 80,000 seniors are considering moving to senior co-housing within the next five years, but there are only about 5,500 dwellings in the existing stock of senior co-housing (Realdania, 2020). And especially during the recent years, co-housing is increasingly highlighted as a possible response to current societal challenges such as loneliness, sustainability, social cohesion, development of peripheral regions etc. More involvement from market actors in the development and supply of co-housing can be a way to meet this demand, as resident-led co-housing often take a long time and involves great risks for the participating residents (Beck, 2020).

On the other hand, the developer-led approach to co-housing challenges the traditional concept of co-housing, especially regarding the lack of influence the future residents has on the concept and design of the houses, the shared facilities, and the organizational set-up. In several definitions of co-housing these issues are central for the concept of co-housing, and as developer-led co-housing aims to reduce or even shortcut this part of co-housing it might be questioned if the settlement still qualifies as being labelled “co-housing”? However, what remains central in developer-led co-housing is the sharing activities and building of community after moving in. But how will the lack of involvement in the initial stages influence the community-building, shared dining and other activities? Which values and ideas for the co-housing does the developers feed into the developer-led the co-housing settlements? How does the recruitment of future residents take place? Will there be conflicts due to the lack of previous involvement – or will there be less conflicts, as the residents don’t have to make decisions on design, economy, process etc.?

Aim and methodology

The paper is based on a study with the aim to gain an understanding of how the current wave of developer-driven co-housing projects is contributing to the market for co-housing, and to gain experiences from the developer-led co-housing settlements that have been established so far. The study was carried out 2021-2022 (Jensen et al, 2022b). The study uses a mixed-methods approach: One activity is to establish an overview of recent and ongoing Danish developer-led co-housing settlements. The mapping started from an overview of developer-led co-housing projects established by consultant Bolette van Deurs in 2020 (for the Danish membership organization Bofælleskap.dk), containing app. 50 developer-led co-housing settlements. The list was extended by collecting examples from developers web-pages, searching in databases, and by joining various networks (including the Housing Laboratory, Ørestad Innovation City Copenhagen's (ØICC) working group for social sustainability in the built environment, and Realdania's networks for alternative forms of housing). Also, a parallel research project, on mapping and analyzing Danish co-housing projects, helped to identify several developer-led projects.

A second activity is interviews with actors behind developer-driven co-housing projects in order to understand rationales, approaches, and motivations behind their involvement in co-housing, as well as their experiences so far. This included in-depth qualitative interviews with 16 developers, consultants and investors, based on a semi-structured interview-guide. Of the 16 interviews, six were conducted online through Teams, the rest with physical presence. Two interviews were with community managers (in Ibihaven and Plushusene), and thus overlapped with case-studies of developer-driven co-housing settlements that represented a third research approach in the study. The aim of the case-studies was to collect experiences from the residents’ everyday-life and practical use of the settlements. This included three focus group interviews with residents in three different settlements (Plushusene, Diakonissestiftelsen and Ibihaven), as well as interviews with three community managers in the settlements, representing the owner. The interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide and took place in the three respective settlements, in the shared house. The interviews were combined with a walk-and-talk presentation of the settlement, both shared facilities and private dwellings. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The three settlements were chosen because they are some of the few developer-driven co-housing settlements with occupancy before 2021, thus having some experience of being used in practice. Beside the three settlements, there are a few other developer-driven co-housing settlements that had been in use more than a year in 2021. Attempts to arrange interviews with residents in one settlement (Krake in Lejre) failed. Shorter interviews were made with residents of Bovieran in Frederikssund, Generationernes Hus in Århus and Skråningen in Lejre, as a part of a parallel research project, and have been to some extent used in the study. The covid pandemic has to some extent affected the residential communities and their use of the shared facilities, especially as several settlements have been under start-

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up as it has put a limit on where much the residents have been able to meet and what joint activities one has been able to undertake together. As fourth research activity in the study was workshops held with developers, architects and consultants who work with developer-driven co-housing: Three workshops (one on-line, two with physical presence) have been held with key actors who have worked with developer-driven housing communities, where the challenges and experiences have been discussed. Summaries have been written from each of the workshops, which have subsequently been sent out to the participants. Input from those workshops have been used in the study.

International experiences

Previous research on co-housing in Europe (Hagbert et al, 2020; Lang et al, 2018; Tummers, 2016) shows several examples of market actors' participation in establishing co-housing. However, there are relatively few examples on developers acting as initiator. Some examples are found, e.g. is a German study comparing two housing communities, a classic developer-driven and a developer-driven (Huber, 2022). In the USA, on the other hand, both developer-driven models and partnership models on a larger scale have been used as an alternative to the resident-initiated model for establishing housing communities (Williams, 2008; 2005). The reason is that the resident-driven approach has some weaknesses: It can be both risky, time-consuming and expensive as the residents must have the skills to work with professionals and at the same time take all financial risk. Although the daily costs are lower in housing associations, partly due to the sharing of facilities, the construction is significantly more expensive due to the extra facilities, a longer construction process, as well as unique and specially designed homes and communal houses that are only manufactured once (Williams, 2005 p.18). Therefore, the US has experienced an emergence of both "developer-driven" models and "partnership models" for the establishment of co-housing, as an alternative to the resident-driven model. Compared to the resident-driven model and the partnership model, the developer model has a fundamental advantage in being able to develop, finance and establish housing communities faster than with the other models, have a better opportunity to buy attractive land, and contribute to creating a larger number of co-housing settlements. However, there are also risks associated with developers establishing housing associations, including uncertainty about resale value and demand for co-housing. This is partly because residents in co-housing tend to be relatively homogeneous, and although high homogeneity often implies high social capital, the downside is that co-housing can be perceived as a kind of closedness that makes co-housing less attractive to a wider audience (Williams, 2005). This is something that both the co-housing settlements themselves and the developers have been aware of. Therefore, developers might aim to create greater diversity in the residential composition by creating affordable housing and using a more targeted recruitment for the co-housing settlements (Williams, 2005 p. 15). The experience from the USA is that the knowledge of co-housing in the wider population is limited, that outsiders often confuse co-housing with more collectivist forms of housing - therefore the co-housing concept needs to be clearly explained (Williams, 2008). One way to increase the access to co-housing for a wider audience is to establish rented dwellings which allow doubters to move in for a limited time and see what it means to live in co-housing, without committing to an owner-occupied home. In general, the experience from US is that private rental housing is easier to establish with professional developers and investors, while the resident-driven co-housing typically result in owner-occupied or cooperative housing (Williams, 2008).

The development of market-driven models for co-housing can also be seen as a transition of co-housing, from being a niche that has primarily been initiated by grassroots and residents, to an established part of the construction- and housing sector, where it is professional building actors that establish co-housing (Williams, 2005; Boyer, 2018). When this happens, it is typically because the innovation (in this case, co-housing) offers solutions to a number of societal challenges, which calls for a further spread of the innovation. The transition can take place via "repetition", "upscaling" or "translation", which involves adaptations and developments of the original understanding of "community" (Boyer, 2018). This development can thus involve both an adaptation or "mainstreaming" of the existing co-housing concepts, but it can also provide an opportunity for further innovation.

The principal strengths and weaknesses of resp. developer-driven and resident-initiated co-housing are summarized in the table below.

	Developer-driven (top-down)	Resident-driven (bottom-up)
Strengths	<p>Establishment of a housing association can be done more quickly as significant decisions are made by the developer</p> <p>Easier access to finance. Developer can reduce financial risks by spreading them across multiple projects</p> <p>Better opportunities for learning from project to project</p> <p>Fewer conflicts between residents due to design decisions</p> <p>Opportunity for greater diversity: Better opportunity to recruit "ordinary" Danes to communities (eg establishment of rental housing)</p> <p>Better opportunities for innovative solutions</p>	<p>The community is shaped according to the residents' preferences and values</p> <p>The resident feels greater ownership of the community as they themselves have helped to define it</p> <p>Better opportunity to build a common culture</p> <p>Fewer conflicts after start-up, as common values and practices are clarified in the planning prior to moving in</p> <p>Risk of "bad chemistry" between residents identified before moving in (and possibly resolved)</p>
Weaknesses / challenges	<p>Resident preferences and values are less involved in the design of the community</p> <p>Clarification and communication of the community's values and intentions towards future residents</p> <p>Recruitment and "sorting" of residents</p> <p>Facilitation of residents before, during and after moving in - to what extent?</p>	<p>Slow process of establishing community</p> <p>Lack of professionalism around land acquisition and construction</p> <p>Decision-making processes and consensus democracy in start-up can lead to dropout of residents</p> <p>Great financial risk for residents, eg in the event of dropouts in the process or delays in construction</p> <p>Risk of "enthusiasts" dominating the projects, and a uniform composition of residents is created with a lack of diversity</p>

Table 1. Principal strengths and weaknesses on developer-led co-housing and resident-led co-housing.

The market for developer-driven co-housing in Denmark

In Denmark, it is primarily the resident-driven model and the partnership model that have been dominant (Beck, 2020). Professional building actors have also played an important role in relation to consultancy and construction, but rarely as initiators of co-housing. In the late 1990s, however, there was a period with several developer-led senior co-housing projects, for instance *Resort Gruppen*, *Lind og Risør* and *Planlægningsgruppen* as initiators, which contributed to the large growth of senior co-housing in that period (Pedersen, 2013). One of the experiences at the time was that pure senior co-housing was perceived as an obstacle for resale, as it was difficult to attract younger buyers. Another thing that slowed down the development of senior co-housing was that the municipalities did not want to reserve building plots for co-housing, but chose to sell to the highest bidder, which typically was for detached houses, and this made further development difficult. This meant that the elderly had to pay the same for a new terraced house as the old house (ibid, p. 145). All in all, this led to a decline of the commercial engagement of co-housing, which also co-incided with the financial crisis around 2007-08 where the building activity drastically declined, and so did the development of co-housing. In spite of the low activity, a survey revealed a large demand amongst seniors for senior co-housing.

On this background, the private philanthropic foundation Realdania in 2016 started a campaign "Spaces and communities for the elderly", that encouraged (and financially supported) municipalities, developers, investors, architects, housing associations and others to collaborate on establishing senior co-housing projects. This resulted in 10 projects with different constellations, concepts and collaborations on senior co-housing, that provided experience for the involved actors to possibly continue developing senior co-housing. Three of them (Kamelias Hus, Havtorn and Balancen) have been established and are part of the

analysis in this paper (see table below), while other projects are still being developed. There is no doubt that this initiative has contributed to make the professional building sector to take up co-housing. Most recently, the Ministry of the Interior and Housing has prepared an overview of possible initiatives that can promote building communities and housing associations (Ministry of the Interior and Housing, 2021), and have started to implement some of the initiatives.

The developer-driven co-housing projects that have been identified in this project and forms the basis for our analysis is presented in the table below. This list contains 17 co-housing projects with 842 dwellings, established between 2018 and 2021.

Year for establishment	No of dwellings per year	No of co-housing projects	Name (and location) of co-housing project	No of dwellings	Developer
2018	47	1	Diakonissestiftelsen (Frederiksberg)	47	Diakonissestiftelsen
2019	95	2	Kamelias hus (Valby)	49	PKA, Realdania and FB-Gruppen Ecovillage
			Skråningen I (Lejre)	46	
2020	444	9	Krake (Lejre)	27	AlmenR Bovieran A/S Bovieran A/S Plushusene Tetris Pensiondanmark KFH Seniorbofælleskab Realdania By & Byg Brabrand Boligforening og Århus Kommune
			Bovieran (Frederikssund)	55	
			Bovieran (Nærheden)	55	
			Plushusene (Nærheden)	139	
			Ibihaven (Slagelse)	76	
			Broen (Køge)	29	
			Sundhaven (Guldborgsund)	31	
			Havtorn (Ringkøbing-Skjern)	14	
			Generationernes Hus (Århus)	18	
2021	278	5	Balancen (Kildebjerg, Ry)	33	Pensiondanmark Ecovillage Bovieran A/S Bovieran A/S Tetris
			Skråningen 2 (Lejre)	53	
			Bovieran (Frederiksværk)	55	
			Bovieran (Ishøj)	55	
			Hermannshaven (Næstved)	60	
Total	842	17		842	

Table 2. An overview of the developer-driven co-housing settlements established in Denmark since 2018.

The developer-driven co-housing projects have accounted for a significant part of the growth that has taken place in recent years in the number of newly established housing associations. A recent mapping of all Danish co-housing projects (Jensen et al, 2022a) shows that in recent years there has been a large growth in newly established co-housing projects, with almost 2,800 dwellings established in the period 2018-2021. Of this, the developer-driven co-housing has thus accounted for app. 30%.

At the same time, several new developer-driven co-housing projects are on the way. Our mapping shows that about 1,900 homes in developer-driven co-housing projects are expected to be built and occupied in 2022 and 2023, corresponding to almost 1,000 homes per year on average. In that case, this will constitute a significant increase, as the supply so far has been 300-400 homes per year (in 2020 and 2021). In that case, developer-driven co-housing will take an even larger share of the total supply of co-housing projects in the coming years. Moreover, it is likely that more developers, investors and housing companies offering co-housing will emerge in the coming years, and further increase the supply.

Who are the developers?

The actors behind the developer-driven co-housing can be divided into different groups:

- *Traditional construction and developer-companies* that have established a subsidiary that is responsible for establishing co-housing. This includes the companies “Bovieran” (owned by Sjælsø Gruppen), “Plushusene” (owned by NREP and M+ Invest), and “Agorahaverne” (owned by Tetris). They have each developed a certain turn-key concept for co-housing (physical design, number of dwellings, type of ownership, target groups, shared facilities, organizational set-up etc.)

that is only marginally changed from project to project. This group of developers have all in all accounted for almost 500 homes, corresponding to 60% of all dwellings in developer-driven co-housing. Bovieran (originally a Swedish concept) and Agorahaverne are both senior co-housing concepts, where Plushusene mixes seniors, families and singles. Due to the pre-defined concept, the involvement of the residents in design-solutions is limited before moving in. In Agorahaverne there is facilitation of the community (organizing the shared activities, establishing events etc.) when the residents are moving in. For Plushusene there is a caretaker and a “host” engaged permanently in the community, that facilitates shared activities etc.

- *Smaller and specialized companies* that work exclusively with co-housing. This includes the companies Ecovillage, Fabulas, AlmenR and Bærebo, all established 2017-20218. These companies have no pre-defined concept for co-housing or a design they follow, but generally have a more value-based concept. They operate with various degrees of user involvement in the design and organization of the co-housing – AlmenR and Bærebo being the more ambitious of the four with plenty user involvement, whereas Fabulas and Ecovillage are working with design, stemming from collaboration with various architects, but not with input from the future residents. The companies have different sources and strategies for financing. They generally aim at establishing age-mixed co-housing, but also in some cases senior co-housing. They have preferences for home ownerships and co-ops, but also private renting and public housing are options, depending on collaboration partners on the specific project. So far, only AlmenR and Ecovillage have established co-housing projects (representing 15% of the dwellings in developer-driven co-housing), but several projects is in pipeline, also for Bærebo and Fabulas.
- *Pension funds*, such as Pensiondanmark, PKA and PFA. Although they are not necessarily developers, they are initiators for establishing co-housing, typically senior co-housing, based on private renting. They typically have no specific co-housing concept, but often works with shifting partners from project to project. They are typically testing different approaches to user involvement and facilitation after moving in, and learning from that. So far, they have established 13% of all dwellings amongst developer-driven co-housing. All three projects have been established as a part of Realdania’s initiative “Spaces and communities for the elderly”, that have served as test-beds for developing concepts. They typically have tested the demand for cohousing through market research, and have developed investment plans for disseminating the co-housing, so due to their large assets it is expected that these investors and shifting developers will expand the coming years.
- *Public housing associations*¹. This sector, representing app. 20% of all dwellings in Denmark, have already established several co-housing projects, especially in senior co-housing (Petersen, 2013), including the very first senior co-housing project in Denmark in 1987. However, the initiatives to establish co-housing has traditionally come from groups of residents who have approached a public housing association, and in collaboration they have developed a co-housing project. This corresponds to the partnership-model described by Williams (2008). Recently, however, some public housing associations have developed ideas of being more pro-active in developing co-housing, and different associations have been involved in the concept “House of the Generations”, where the idea is to establish different co-housing units in one house and establish facilities and meeting places that local citizens from the neighborhood can use. Due to the pre-defined concept, there have been no user involvement in the design and organization of the co-housing. This concept is a spin-off from the concept “Social housing Plus”, an affordable housing concept developed around 2010, which represented a large leap in innovation amongst the involved housing associations (Jensen and Stensgaard, 2017). A first version of “House of the

¹ Also labelled from time to time as the “Non-profit housing sector” or “Social housing sector”. However, the Public Housing Sector departs from the general understanding of social housing, as it is open to everyone, is based on a non-profit (balanced) rent, covering just expenses, is owned by non-profit housing associations, based on residential democracy and being operated under the act of Public Housing (Nielsen & Haagerup, 2017).

Generations” has been established in Aarhus, as a collaboration between the public housing association Brabrand Boligforening and the municipality of Aarhus. Thus, this actor groups’ share of the developer-driven co-housing has been limited so far (app. 1%).

- *Other actors*, which include other types of companies, institutions, developers etc. that are sparsely or ad-hoc involved in co-housing. One example is the Deaconess Foundation (a private institution and a property owner), that developed a senior-cohousing project on a free plot in their property at Frederiksberg in 2018. Another example is a small developer “*KFH Seniorbofællesskab*”, located in Lolland (a peripheral region to Copenhagen), who has established two senior co-housing projects (as private renting) in its home region, some of the few co-housing projects to be established in peripheral regions. Prior to the construction stage, groups of residents were invited to information meetings about the project, and several signed up as being interested. This group actors have so far only represented a small share of the market for co-housing.

The developers and initiators behind the developer-driven co-housing projects that have emerged in recent years are in other words very diverse, with apparently very few common characteristics. As a part of the project, a number of developers, investors, and consultants behind developer-driven co-housing projects were interviewed. The informants were chosen across the five groups of actors as outlined above. The aim was to shed light on their ambitions of taking up co-housing as an activity, and their thoughts about concepts, target-groups, recruiting residents, demand, involvement of residents, facilitation of the community etc. As indicated above, the different actors presented various views on their concepts. In spite of the differences amongst the various actors, there were some shared understandings and ambitions expressed in the interviews.

Developing turn-key co-housing for ordinary Danes, based on voluntary participation

In the interviews, several actors referred to three central points of their ambitions with co-housing:

- 1) To reduce the long decision-making process by delivering turn-key co-housing projects where residents could move directly in, and start their community instantly
- 2) To attract “ordinary Danes” to the co-housing, indicating that co-housing until now has mainly been for certain groups of people (i.e. with long educations, high incomes, with ambitions of living a radical alternative lifestyle etc.)
- 3) Basing the community on voluntary participation, meaning that for instance mandatory participation in shared dinners or other activities is not the way forward

In the interviews these three key ambitions are interwoven. For instance, several developers highlight the long and cumbersome decision-making processes associated with establishing the traditional bottom-up co-housing, which means that “the average Dane” would never throw herself into it, and that they (the developers) therefore focus on establishing turn-key co-housing, where all significant decisions about design have been made: “... *we have decided what the kitchen looks like, what the door handle looks like and how many m² there is, how our common house is programmed - of course based on all the analyzes and research we have done, to hit the things that mean something to people, but basically we make all the choicesThere are really many people who want to live in co-housing, they never get to it if they all have to start from scratch our residents love that we have decided what kind of kitchen there is, etc., they do not want to make those choices at all*” (CEO, Plushusene). An investor says in a similar way: “*The classic approach - the grassroots approach - excludes some Danes: they cannot stand all that*” (Program Manager, PFA). Several informants emphasize that the long processes and decision-making procedures that have helped to establish traditional co-housing have mostly been made out of necessity, and not out of desire: “*People who have been 10 years of establishing a housing association are throwing up. If you offered them a community that had been built, they would be very happy... ”... ..*” I hear from 8 out of 10 that you would like something turnkey. I myself think that self-grown co-housing has qualities, but it also become a bit too alternative” (Director, Fabulas). The advantage of the turn-key concepts is, according to the developer, that the residents, when they move in, can spend time and energy to have fun with each

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other and make groups, have the surplus to see each other, and avoid conflicts about interior design. Some may be dissatisfied, but they do not get angry at the neighbors because the neighbor ended up deciding. Some developers say that they are not giving up the traditional approach to Danish co-housing, but instead taking the best from Danish and foreign examples, old and new co-housing, and linking it to the way people's everyday life looks like today: *“Co-housing is not the way we already know it with a lot of buildings and a community houses in the middle - it can be more than that. What people are asking for first and foremost: It's not the communities based on mandatory commitment – it's the communities based on voluntary commitment”* (Program Manager, PFA). In many of the existing senior co-housing projects, the community is based on duties and mandatory participation, but this is not what make communities attractive for ordinary people: *“the good senior life... is where you meet and play petanque. This is where the community arises - not by holding a general assembly”* (Program Manager, PFA).

It is not only private developers who considers how to reach a wider audience on co-housing. A larger actor in the public housing sector (Boligkontoret Danmark, an administrative consultant) has developed a concept for residential involvement in co-housing, based on shorter and more streamlined process, where the residents are not necessarily involved from the very beginning, and where some decisions are made for them along the way. This will make it easier for residents with fewer resources to participate, and thus give a more heterogenic group, compared to traditional bottom-up processes. Their experience is that there are many others who would like to live in co-housing, but do not have the resources for the long participation processes: *“We can see that many of the traditional processes give you a very homogenized group. Study groups, working groups, they have a great influence on how the rules are formulated you have to keep the residents a little out of it, to get a more heterogenic group in”* (Boligkontoret Danmark).

Several informants are aware, that having a homogeneous composition of residents in relation to age, gender, etc. might create problems when re-letting (finding new tenants). A consultant in the public housing sector (OK Fonden) mentions that even though there is a great demand for senior co-housing, the existing co-housing settlements do not necessary have long waiting lists, because aspiring residents from the outside have an image of 'that's how they are, down there' and wonder 'do I fit in?' (project manager, OK Fonden). This is parallel to the development and barriers that Williams (2008) describes in the American market for co-housing where outsiders have little knowledge about the co-housing residents and how everyday life is in the co-housing settlements. Also, some developers have a focus on low-income residents who would not normally have the opportunity to move into co-housing, but perhaps would be the ones that is most in need of the benefits of community (due to highest loneliness rates and greatest excess mortality amongst low-income groups). This requires affordable dwellings on affordable land. In Agorahaverne, there are single homes down to 55 m², at an affordable rent due to a location in Slagelse, some distance from Copenhagen. *“We want to build something for people who do not have a 1.5 million equity (DKR, app. 200.000 €)”* (developer, Tetris). Attracting "ordinary" residents who would not be able to join a start-up group for co-housing settlement themselves, also means thinking about what can create a community. In the Agora Gardens, for example, a workshop is being set up to attract single men. *“In this generation, men must have something to do. There must be an excuse to meet. A "do" community* (developer, Tetris). There is an ambition to build nudging into the architecture, so that the physical framework helps to create a behavioral regulation - for example, to have one main entrance, so that a natural traffic and informal meeting place is created in front of the mailboxes. Also, Tetris aims to challenge existing knowledge and practice about sizes of co-housing settlements and builds up to 70 homes in each settlement, as they believe that modern seniors like to “shop around” in different interest communities, and not just wish to live in a small dense community.

Characteristics about developer-driven co-housing projects

The table below summarizes key figures and information about the developer-driven co-housing settlements. The key numbers are compared to all co-housing projects in Denmark, based on a recent mapping (Jensen et al., 2022a).

Characteristics	Developer-driven co-housing	All co-housing*
<u>Type of ownership</u>		
Privately owned	15%	27%
Co-operative housing	27%	26%
Private rented	58%	10%
Public housing	1%	36%
<u>Target groups</u>		
Age-mixed co-housing	32%	60%
Senior co-housing	68%	40%
Avg no. of dwellings per pr. Co-housing project	52 dwellings	23 dwellings
Dwelling sizes	Many small dwellings Few larger dwellings (> 120 m ²)	Mixed dwelling sizes 34% residents live in dwellings > 120 m ²
Shared spaces	5-29 m ² pr dwelling for shared space and indoor facilities	6-16 m ² pr dwelling for shared space
<u>Building types</u>		
Single-family houses	3%	11%
Row-houses	42%	69%
Multi-story buildings	55%	20%
Localisation	Mainly in the metropolitan region Few in peripheral regions (5% of all dwellings)	Spread across the country, but mainly close to the larger cities Few in peripheral regions (2% of all dwellings)

Table 3. Key characteristics on resp. Danish developer-driven co-housing and Danish co-housing in general

The key figures suggest a number of differences that the developer-driven approach to co-housing introduces, which is in line with the ambitions of the developers. The higher proportion of privately rented dwellings in developer-driven co-housing and fewer owner-occupied dwellings, compared to the existing co-housing market, is parallel to Williams' findings from the US market; developers prefer private renting, where resident-led initiatives often lead to owner-occupancy (Williams, 2008). It might also reflect that developers to a higher degree build senior-co-housing, which mainly consists of private rented dwellings, combined with service facilities. This is reflected in the building types, where the share of multi-story buildings (55% of all dwellings) is much higher compared to traditional co-housing where row-houses and the "dense-low" typology are predominant. Also, private renting has a potential to make dwellings more economically accessible for the wider population – depending on size and location of the dwellings. There are more smaller dwellings, and fewer large dwellings amongst the developer-driven co-housing, but this might also reflect a higher proportion of senior co-housing. Private renting also allows the residents to apply for housing subsidies, that reduces the rent considerably, and in most of the co-housing with private rented dwellings, the developers' calculations on rent level and residential demand, are based on these subsidies.

Experiences from three developer-driven co-housing projects

In the following we present findings from three case studies of developer-driven co-housing settlements: Plushusene in Nærheden, Ibihaven in Slagelse and Diakonissestiftelsen at Frederiksberg.

- Plushusene Nærheden is located in Hedehusene, about 30 km west of Copenhagen. The target group is a mix of families, singles and seniors, and the buildings contains both terraced houses and townhouses with apartments, shared outdoor areas and a common house for dining, activities etc. There are 139 dwellings and around 300 residents. There is a caretaker and a host in the settlement, who facilitates joint activities for the residents.
- Ibihaven is a senior co-housing settlement located in Slagelse, app. 100 km west of Copenhagen. There are 76 private rented dwellings, a shared kitchen and shared facilities for hobbies, gardenwork etc. The dwellings are centered around a covered indoor area, that has the function as an informal meeting space, with plants, benches, tables and small spaces for reading, playing

games, relaxing etc. During the first year, there is a host present in the settlement some days a week, to help the residents settling the community in the beginning.

- The Deaconess (Diakonissestiftelsen) senior co-housing settlement is located at Frederiksberg, neighbor to by Copenhagen municipality. It contains 47 privately rented dwellings in six 3-4 story buildings, and a shared room for meetings and dining. Between the buildings there are semi-public gardens and outdoor spaces for shared activities.

The cases studies are based on document studies and interviews with owners and community managers, but mainly with residents from three settlements. The interviews were carried out as group-interviews with 5-6 residents, that started with a presentation of the co-housing community, and the common house. At the time of the interview (in 2021), the residents in the Deaconess senior co-housing settlement had lived there for 3 years (established 2018), and the residents in Plushusene and Ibihaven had lived in their settlement one year (established 2020). This meant that the community, especially in Plushusene and Ibihaven was still in the making. Moreover, due to covid, most of the first year meant that the shared facilities had been locked down, and the options for meetings had been reduced. Nevertheless, some shared activities (mostly outdoors) had taken place during covid, and after covid, more activities had begun, including shared dining.

Although one has to be careful interpreting interviews from a handful residents, it seems as if the general satisfaction with the co-housing settlement is generally high; the residents express happiness about the daily meeting with other neighbors. For instance, one resident says that when she walks down to the waste-bins with waste, she have to be sure to have plenty of time, because she always meet a lot of people she have to say hello to or have a chat with. Asked about her overall satisfaction with living in the co-housing community, on a scale from 1 to 10, she answers “11”. Other residents contrast it to their previous home, for example: *“We have lived on a closed residential road for over 20 years (...) but there was no sense of community (...) people had enough in themselves behind their small hedges (...) here is the opportunity to get out and talk to others (...) it gives us a freedom to look out over our own lawn”* (Residents, Plushusene, 2021). Several of the residents speak of security as a significant quality, for example in the case of illness *“I have had a period of illness, and I have really felt that it is safe to live here, it has meant a lot to me”* (Residents, Diakonissestiftelsen, 2021). The feeling of safety, and the awareness that they can get help from each other, is another oft-mentioned theme: *“If I suddenly become ill, I will never worry about calling my neighbor. Knowing that you know it, means a lot”* (Resident, Deaconess Foundation, 2021).

Several residents praise the presence of the local host, that acts as a facilitator of local events, arranger of hobby-clubs, and a local person that one can meet in the common house, have a coffee a chat with. A resident says: *“I do not know if we would have applied to live here if there were not two people here permanently (caretaker and host) who did not live here - they are not part of us, which is quite important”*. Another says: *“Without Kristina it would not be good - she is indispensable, she knows many different things and is flexible - it requires such a person as her, who cares and is good at communicating”* (resident, Plushusene). The residents didn’t know each other before moving in, and with a large number of residents it's probably necessary with resources to facilitate shared activities. The residents seem to come from different backgrounds – in Plushusene and in Ibihaven the backgrounds mentioned by residents are pedagogue, economist, electrician, retail business, official in the post, entrepreneur, provost (priest). A developer stated that *“the only thing they have in common is that they prefer community-based housing”* (Developer, Tetris). In that respect these settlements seem more heterogenous compared to the traditional bottom-up co-housing that tends to gather residents with long educations and well-paid jobs (Jensen et al, 2022a; Jakobsen and Larsen, 2019). This might be due to the private rented dwellings, that requires no up-front equity to be paid, in contrast to owner-occupancy and co-operatives which are the dominant types of ownership in resident-led co-housing. However, the residents we interviewed in the three developer-led co-housing settlements do not see their dwelling as affordable. On the contrary, they see it as quite expensive, and they even get less private space that they could have had by renting a “traditional” flat: *“We pay for the common house - but I get more value out of it than if I had had 10 m² more in the apartment”* (resident of Plushusene). There also seem to be a general satisfaction about the many design choices that have been decided in advance by the developers, which is perceived as something positive:

“In advance, we have had a picture of what the homes looked like. I think it was very nice not to have to decide a whole lot, as long as I think, what’s there is nice” (resident, Plushusene). There are some design decisions that residents in the three co-housing settlements are less happy with; some decisions can be changed, while other decisions are not easy to change, and have to be negotiated with the owner. One example is the shared room in Diakonissestiftelsen. It was established in an existing building, and it was not big enough to have all the residents there at once, for instance for shared dining. The administration of the Diakonissestiftelsen were aware of that but expected that it would be quite rarely that all residents would be collected at once – and a small room would also save costs and reduce the rent. However, for the residents it has become a big issue, and they feel very sorry to keep someone out from the shared dining, which they have had to, from time to time. Also, they feel that the room is not being used for spontaneous meetings which is a basic way to interact in the co-housing. Therefore, they have started to negotiate with the owner about possible extension of the room and make calculations about technical solutions and costs. It is inevitably that private renting in co-housing, where residents are expected to have a high degree of influence on daily and yearly operations of the community, will lead to discussions or conflicts with the owner.

Another issue of possible conflicts between owner and tenants is decisions on who to approve as future residents. Legally, the owner has the full right to decide this, with no influence from the existing residents. However, being a co-housing settlement, the existing residents should be able to make collective decisions and cooperate with each other, and therefore the residents have a high interest in having influence on who will be approved as future residents. In all three co-housing settlements the residents have expressed wishes to have more influence on this. For the owner there are however some considerations on why this cannot only be left to the residents: The residents tend to prefer new residents who have the same age as themselves, and especially in senior co-housing this will eventually lead to a very homogenous age-composition, which will make it difficult to recruit new residents (if for instance, the residents all belong to the 80+ segment). In Plushusene and in Diakonissestiftelsen where the residents have been most vocal about their interest there are negotiations on how to give the existing residents more influence on the process, for instance by inviting them with to the interviews with applicants. In all three settlements the owner makes screenings and interviews with aspiring residents, to make sure the applicant is not only interested in the dwelling but wants to be a part of the community. Typically, the applicant will have to write a motivated application before moving in, and doing at least one (and often more) interview with the owner, to find out whether he, she or they are really interested in the co-housing model. This is a long process, as there are typically several applicants that must be interviewed. In some cases, however, there might be vacant dwellings and no interested or qualified residents to move in. In this case, the owner might decide to skip the screening and interviews, and accept residents who can pay the rent, but are not really interested or able to participate in the shared activities. One example is elderly residents, not capable of managing everyday life on their own, but being dependent of service, which normally is an exclusion criterion for moving into senior co-housing. But in some cases, the owner has apparently accepted such residents, setting aside the criteria that the other residents have had to follow, which normally causes some dissatisfaction amongst these residents.

The owner-renter collaboration might develop in various directions; some developers do not see themselves as housing administrators, and therefore aim to sell the co-housing projects to a housing administration company. This is the case with Ibihaven, and other co-housing settlements developed by the developer Tetris. Selling the co-housing will lead to another constellation between owner and the residents, and this could be for better or worse for the relationship and the ability to give residents influence on issues that they legally might not be entitled to, for instance on changing the design in parts of the settlement or having a co-decision on who to approve as future residents.

A third theme brought up during the interviews concerns the organization of the community. An important element in the developer-led cohousing settlements is the emphasis on voluntary participation, and design that leads to spontaneous meetings with neighbors, which in general has been appreciated by the residents. *“It’s nice that you’re not forced into a community – you are in some communities of interest, where you do things that you share”* (resident, Ibihaven). In return, this means that events principally including the entire community, such the shared dining, is voluntary, but due to the voluntary participation not all are likely to show up, and consequently the shared spaces are typically designed not to be able to host everybody in the settlement. However, with emphasis on voluntary participation, spontaneous meetings

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and events, and several small groups meeting, some residents have started asking what it really is that the residents have in common, or what keeps them together? In some of the co-housing settlements there has been no formal organization for the entire settlement, only for smaller interest-based groups, and thus no place to discuss overall issues and visions for the co-housing settlement. This call for a larger organization was most explicitly mentioned in Ibihaven. For instance, one resident said: *"We didn't really know much about this co-housing before we came here – some of us became a little disappointed, not sure what we expect because the whole thing seems a little diffuse"* (Resident, Ibihaven). Another resident said: *"There is not a shared spirit here, there are small communities, but scattered"* (resident, Ibihaven). Some have therefore suggested a shared meeting where the residents can discuss common themes and decisions for the settlement: *".. you don't need to meet every month, but just every second or third month, and have an agenda and minutes from the meeting. This is what you do in a workplace, and in principle the same where a lot of people need to collaborate to reach a result, and here the result is that we all get a better place to live"* (resident, Ibihaven). Some residents discussed whether a size of 50 dwellings would work better than the present 75 dwellings, as it might create a closer community and avoid a division of the settlement between one end and the other.

On a smaller scale, we see the same discussion being present in the other co-housing settlements; the ambition of having a heterogeneous group of residents that haven't met before moving in, in a setting with twice as many dwellings as in traditional co-housing settlements, and an ambition of voluntary participation in shared activities, it is easy to forget the overall ambition or identity for the co-housing settlement. But creating a room for discussion of the shared identity would be a good place to start.

Conclusions and discussion

Developer-led co-housing is a rather new approach to co-housing in Denmark. The first projects were established in 2018, and the majority from 2020 and onwards, so the experiences with them are really new. The study in this paper has looked only at one section of the new co-housing developers in Denmark, a section that is based on pre-defined co-housing concepts and has been one of the most productive so far. There are other developers with different approaches, that makes the supply of co-housing even more varied. Based on the characteristics of international experiences, on interviews with developers, in numbers and characteristics of the developer-led co-housing settlements and on interviews with residents we will argue that there are several advantages with developer-led co-housing that would not be possible to obtain with the traditional bottom-up approach. This includes that a larger number of co-housing settlements can be established faster, which can help to sooner meet the demand for co-housing. Developer-led co-housing is arguably better able to provide co-housing for the citizens with middle or lower incomes, by basing the co-housing on voluntary participation and economically accessible dwellings, as well as providing a turn-key co-housing. In this survey we have not been able to track whether the dwellings actually are more affordable than traditional co-housing, or whether the residents actually are more diverse, or have another social composition than in traditional resident-led co-housing, but this is the impression we get from visiting the co-housing settlements and interviewing residents there. Further research could qualify this question. As indicated in the interviews, there are many elements in the developer-led approach that also influence the forming of the community in the co-housing settlements, so the question is what types of community life, i.e. sharing, collective action etc., will develop in these settlements?

Also for the developers, there are many challenges and uncertainties. One of them is how to mobilize and recruit residents, and to communicate the idea and ambition of the specific co-housing settlement to them. Also, the mobilization and screening to find residents with a real interest in co-housing, and not just the homes, is a challenge. Finally, the question of how and when to facilitate the residents in the process of developing a community where they are able to make shared decisions and organize activities and events, is crucial. For some settlements it seems relatively easy, for others it can be more difficult, for instance when the number of dwellings is large and there is no formal organizational structure to support decision-making and identity-making. The settlements are very new, and there are many experiences to be gained yet. The question is also, how large the demand for co-housing is, and in which form?

However, the developer-led co-housing also seems to challenge the traditional concept of co-housing in different ways, primarily by emphasizing that participation in the community should be voluntary (and not mandatory), and by carefully designing the built environment for spontaneous meetings amongst

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residents and neighbors. Also, the residential participation in the design-stage, as stated by McCamant & Durett (2011) as one of the main elements in co-housing, has more or less vanished in many of the developer-led co-housing approaches (some developers maintain a solid element of residents' participation in the design stage). The developer-led co-housing calls for a reflection on the concept of co-housing; the developer-led co-housing settlements in Denmark are as such accepted as co-housing, in line with traditional co-housing – but often the developer-driven co-housing settlements do not promote themselves to the public as being co-housing, but rather “a place for sharing... with close relations to your neighbor”. One could ask if the developers see “co-housing” as something that signals something exotic or different, and keeps potential residents away – in spite of the large public attention there is on “co-housing”?

We do not see it as a problem for co-housing in Denmark that the concept might be expanding, but welcome that more concepts are emerging, that even might be targeting new groups of residents, bring in more innovation etc. However, we think that distinctions might be necessary to emphasize, especially for the potential residents for who it might be difficult to differentiate between the many different concepts.

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