

The call for Affordable housing in Copenhagen:
The case of the Danish “SocialHousing
Plus”(Almenbolig+) and other new housing
concepts

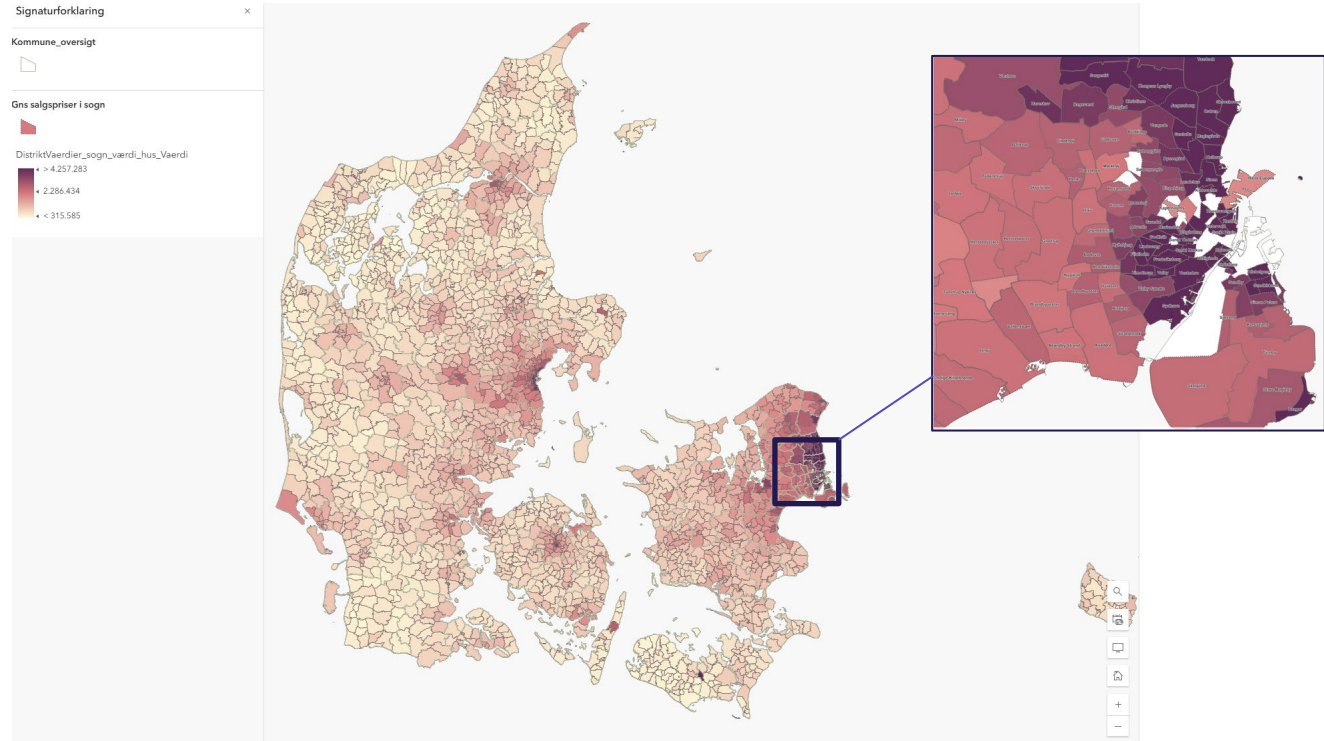
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Salesprices on single-family houses in Denmark

Housing prices in Copenhagen (and other larger cities in Denmark) has rocketed in recent years. But in the 1980ies, Copenhagen municipality was close to bankrupt. Why did it change? And how does the city provide affordable housing?



Copenhagen:
640.000 inhabitants
336.000 dwellings



Nørrebro district, Copenhagen, in the 1980ies

- ▶ Copenhagen municipality close to bankruptcy
- ▶ Poor housing conditions
- ▶ Rent control => stop in investment amongst building owners
- ▶ Out-migration
- ▶ Low investment climate
- ▶ Early masterplans on urban redevelopment stopped building owners motivations for investment



Pictures: Krass Clement (2023) *Timeslag. København Nørrebro 1983-1986*. Gyldendal

Nørrebro today



Time Out Magazine: Copenhagen's Nørrebro district is the coolest in the world

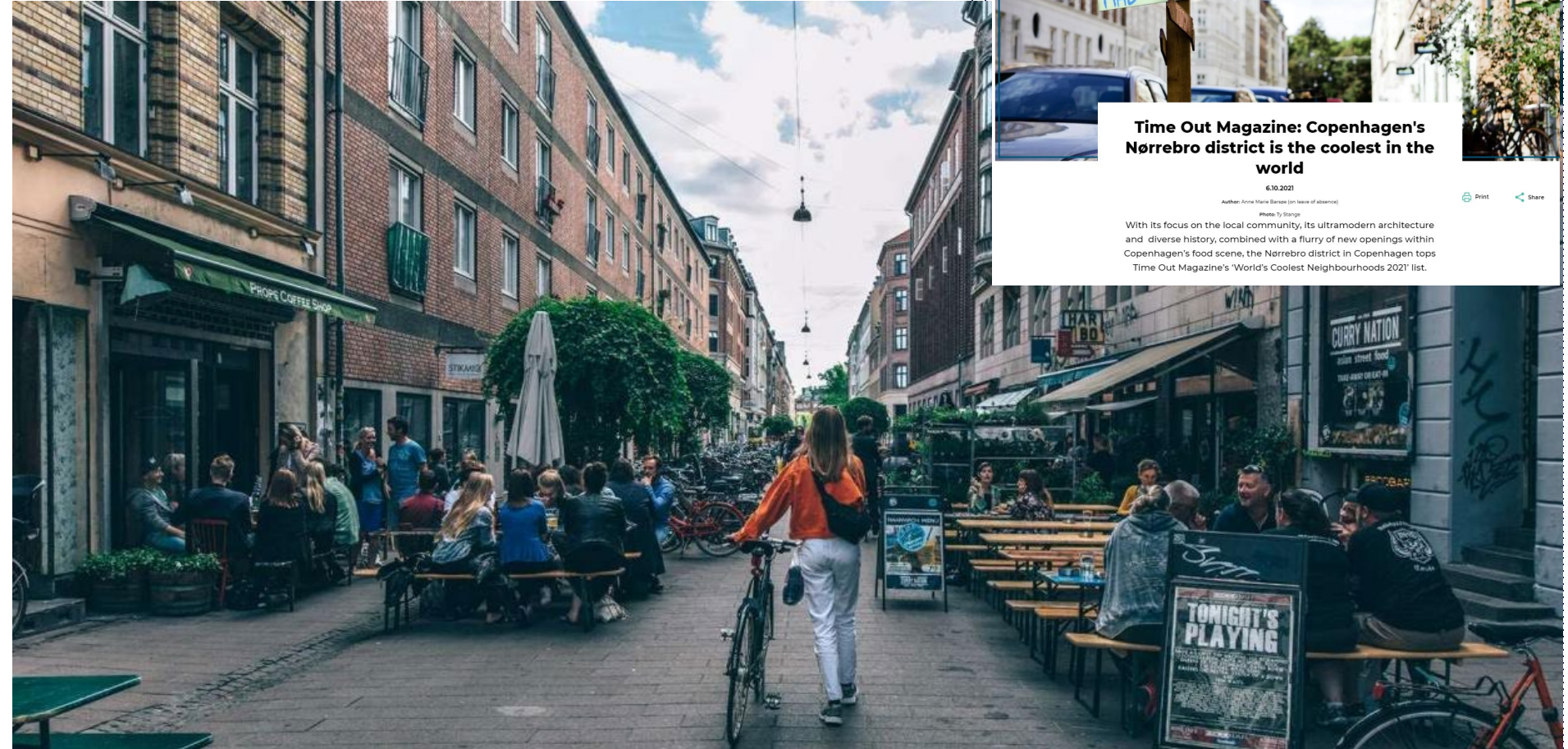
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Author: Anne Marie Barøe (on leave of absence)

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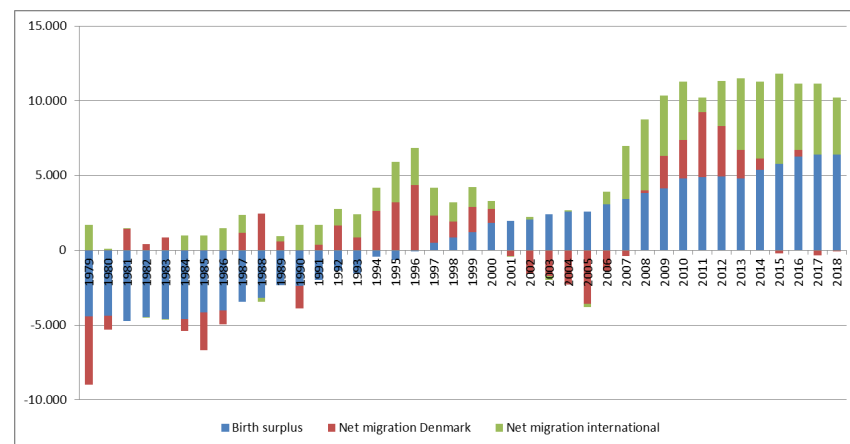
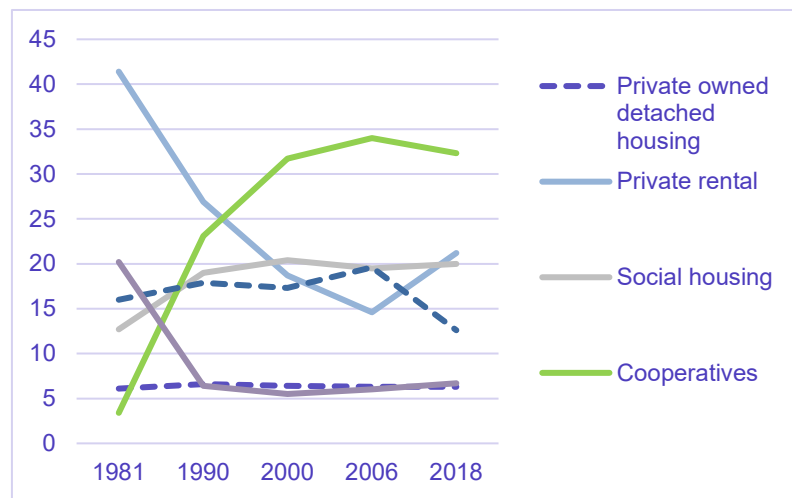
Photo: Ty Strange

With its focus on the local community, its ultramodern architecture and diverse history, combined with a flurry of new openings within Copenhagen's food scene, the Nørrebro district in Copenhagen tops Time Out Magazine's 'World's Coolest Neighbourhoods 2021' list.



What happened? U-turn from the 1990ies

- Slum clearance at Nørrebro mid 1980ies
- Large urban regeneration at Vesterbro in the 1990ies with massive public subsidies
- Housing market reforms:
 - Tenants must be offered the opportunity to buy the building when it is put for sale, to establish a cooperative (andelsboligforening)
 - Exception from rent control when larger renovations are made in existing buildings
 - Exempt from rent control for new buildings since 1992
- Large national infrastructure investments and urban developments (Metro, Oresund Bridge, Orestad)
- Change towards a more positive approach to private investments in the municipality



Social Housing +: A concept for affordable housing in the non-profit housing sector

Many affordable housing concepts being developed – will they remain small-scale niches, or do they have the capacity to make larger changes?

Case: The first Danish affordable housing concept (Social Housing Plus). Aiming at core-workers, who cant afford a house in the metropolitan region

The concept is based on local self-management which implies necessity of collaboration between residents



Aiming at a rent up to 30% lower than comparable new housing

- Large tenders of a standardized housing concept, based on prefabrication with wooden elements
- Low-energy buildings (according to the Danish Building Regulation BR 10), reducing the energy costs in operation
- The buildings are constructed as “basic concepts” where a number of interior development is left to the residents, e.g. establishing interior dividing walls
- Residents are responsible for administration, operation of shared outdoor areas, and parts of the building operation
- Costs for maintenance and savings for future renovations are established through a new concept

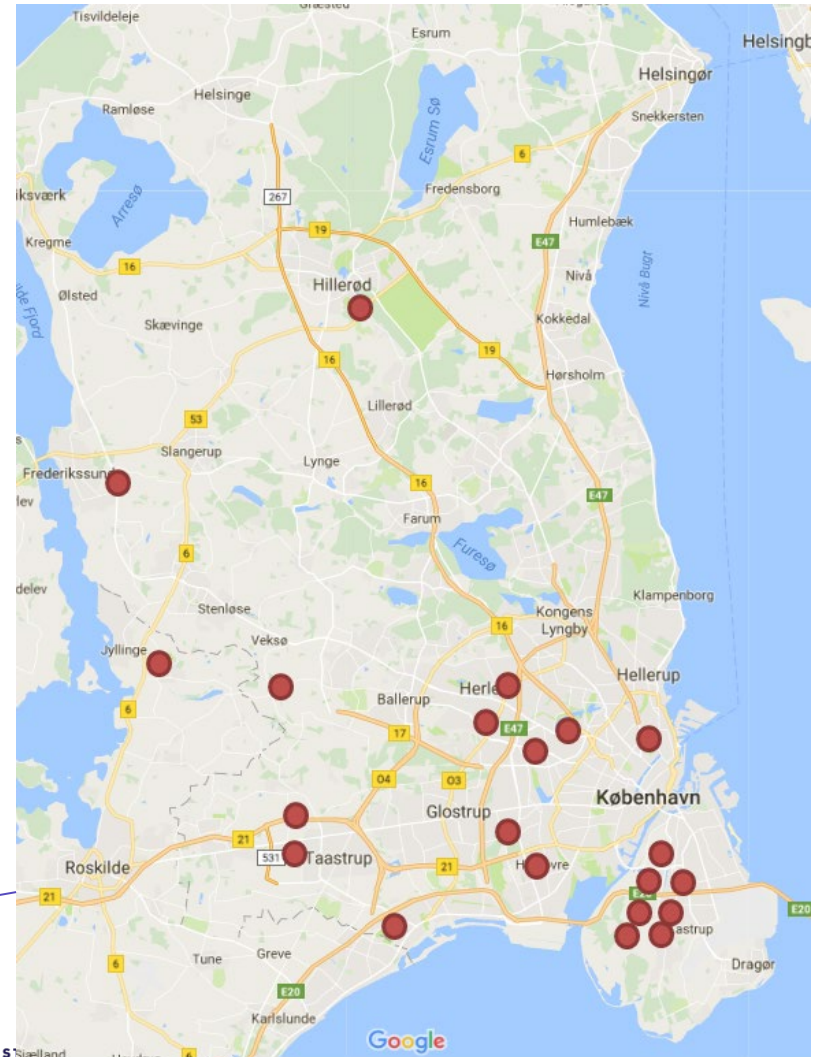
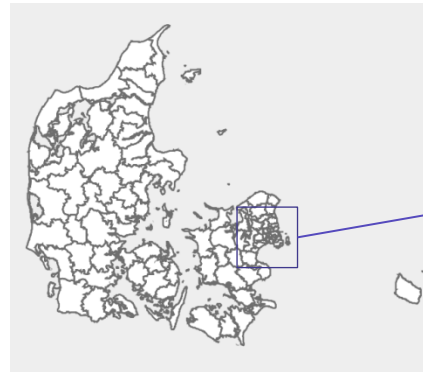


Views on SH+ from housing associations and municipalities

	Yes please	No thanks
Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different housing types• Housing for middle income groups• Innovative concept• Low Energy buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not want more social housing• Financial problems• Affordable housing not relevant
Housing associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers individually adapted housing• Mixed residential composition• Use experiences from SH+ in the existing building stock• Expand the variety of social housing• Lever for problem areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not solve social tasks• Niche product targetted ressourciful residents• No wish to differentiate the administration

Status for SH+

- 24 departments established since 2011, with different lay-out but based on the same concept
- 12-125 dwellings per department, various degrees of out-door spaces
- 1.500 dwellings in total (25% of all new-built social housing since 2011 in the metropolitan region)



Residential composition in SH+: Large differences to the average social housing sector

Table 2. Residential segments in Social Housing + estates compared to social housing in the metropolitan region

	couples with children	residents aged 25 to 49 years	residents with long or medium-long education	Single family households without children
SH+	50%	73%	60%	14%
Social housing in the Metropolitan area	13%	41%	22%	50%

The self-management concept

- Self-management: a) Practical building operation and maintenance (cleaning, lawn-moving, snow-removal and maintenance of outdoor areas, operation of buildings), b) administration, budgetting, accounting, planning of the self-management
- The concept generally works well. A majority of the residents participates in the operation and maintenance. Outsourcing has so far been limited
- 2 out of 3 residents are satisfied with the appearance of the outdoor areas
- The most challenging tasks is budgetting, accounting and technical issues related to building operation
- The amount of work depends on the size of the estate and the number of households
- In average residents uses 1-2 timer hours per month on practical tasks
- 81 % of the residents are satisfied with the amount of work, 3 % finds it too large
- Free-riding: A challenge, but pragmatically managed on a local scale



Interviews

"...I think it's important that you get the freedom to do things that are not locked....when you invest time or money in it, then you feel a larger ownerships to things" (resident interview)

"..Yes, you could compare SH+ with a private co-op... it's also therefore I could not imagine to move away, we have put our own shape on it ... just as we would have done if we had bought our own house ... we have sort of made it our own" (resident, interview)

"It has been insanely demanding, and if I had known that I would never has entered the board" (Board member, SH+ estate)



General conclusions on SH+

- Widespread satisfaction with the concept amongst residents
- Attracts middle-income residents and families from other owner-segments
- Affordability by 22% reduction in rent (the aim was 30%)
- Shared operation and care-taking in general works out well, and increases the social connectivity and sense of responsibility
- Conditions for self-management: A combination of building design, recruiting mechanisms, and a number of adjustments of social housing regulations

Risks and challenges:

- How to maintain a group of committed residents?
- How not to drown in practical duties?
- How to manage free-riding?



Tiny houses – what is on the market?



Bianca's van is 14 m²; no bath or toilet. Bought re-used and modernized for 50.000 kr., and 20.000 kr. transport (EURO 950)



Peter and Marie have built their off-grid tiny house themselves. 24 m² for 150.000 kr. (2000 EUROS) PVs, interiør, heating system etc.



Vibekes house is an architect-designed moveable house of 28 m² plus terrasse. Both on- and off-grid. Vibeke has paid EURO 75.000



"Our houses cost from 100.000 EURO and up. It is a "tesla-model", for a target group that wants comfort" CEO, Mobilehouse).



Tiny houses - Potentials and pitfalls

Our studies shows that there is a huge interest but only few actual houses and communities:

1. Regulations, permits and locations are not in favor of tiny house ideals (many live in the shadow)
2. Municipalities are afraid of "trailer parks" and commons expenses (equal low tax-income) and no studies on the positive social and cultural impacts
3. No standard or "norms" when it comes to housing quality / finance model / insurance etc.
4. Anecdotic and questionable assessment of the environmental impact of tiny houses.

Jonas Hagemøj · 8 t. · 🌍

Hej der ude.

Jeg er ved at samle en flok mennesker til at købe en stor ejendom. Grunden er 6,3 ha og er med strand og skov. Kort sagt, det er pisse fedt. Planen er at vi skal gå 20 sammen om at købe det. Derefter deler grunden op imellem os og flytter ind. Ideen med det hele er, at vi ikke følger bygningsreglementet eller planloven. Det skal være et projekt der kan bane vej for flere lignende projekter i resten af landet. Vi er så småt ved at have lagt en plan for hvordan det kan lade sig gøre. Hvis man er interesseret så ring til mig på [redacted] eller skriv på messenger.



Synes

Translated:

"Hi folks. I am looking for people to co-invest in a large piece of land. ... The plan is to share it between us. The basic idea is to not follow the building regulation or planning law. This should be a project that can show the way ..."

12 kommentarer



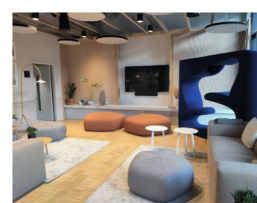
Micro-living and co-living



- A new way of living with small space ?
- Tapping into the sustainability agenda: Less private space, more sharing, more community, reducing loneliness, providing affordable housing, reducing CO2-footprint. What's not to like?
- An international trend with increasing supply from international investors
- For whom is it an attractive option? For people on the move, looking for temporary housing and for community – or for a broader audience?

Characteristics

- Tiny private spaces (10-30 m²)
- One-room apartments
- Many shared spaces and facilities, e.g. shared kitchen, roof terrace, fitnessroom, co-working space, cinema mm.
- Shared activities (events, dining etc)
- Facilitation by community manager
- Options for service, e.g. shopping, cleaning, washing etc.
- Furnished rooms
- Digitalisation of service
- Sharing and renting of household equipment
- High renting flexibility (like hotels, i.e. flexible periods, no deposit)

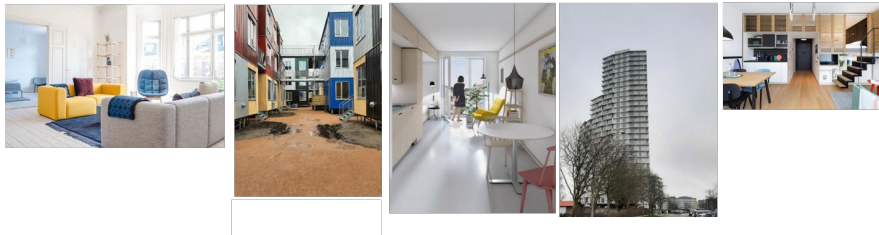


Micro-apartments in Denmark – Potentials and pitfalls

10% growth in small apartments (< 50 m²) nationwide since 2010 (from 123.000 flats in 2010 to 135.000 in 2024). In the two largest cities the growth has been 20% (Copenhagen) and 35% (Aarhus)

Based on desk research, we estimate that there are app 10.000 micro-apartments in Denmark that represent a large share of the small apartments built since 2010

Types of micro-apartments				
Co-living	Student accommodation	Micro-apartments for students and young urban professionals	Serviced micro-living	Hotel-flats



- There is a demand for micro-apartments. For some, micro-apartments fills in "a hole in the market", for other micro-apartments is a way to get a place of their own
- Housing quality is debatable – should shared spaces and facilities be included in the assessment?
- Shared facilities: A large variation. Uncertain how much shared spaces and facilities are being used by the residents – and to which extent shared spaces compensates for small private spaces.
- Municipalities see different potentials and threats in micro-apartments: On one hand providing small and affordable flats, one the other hand risk of "problem"-areas"
- There is a large potential for designing better micro-apartments
- Micro-apartments are not for all; but can they influence mainstream housing on how to maintain quality when shrinking private space?



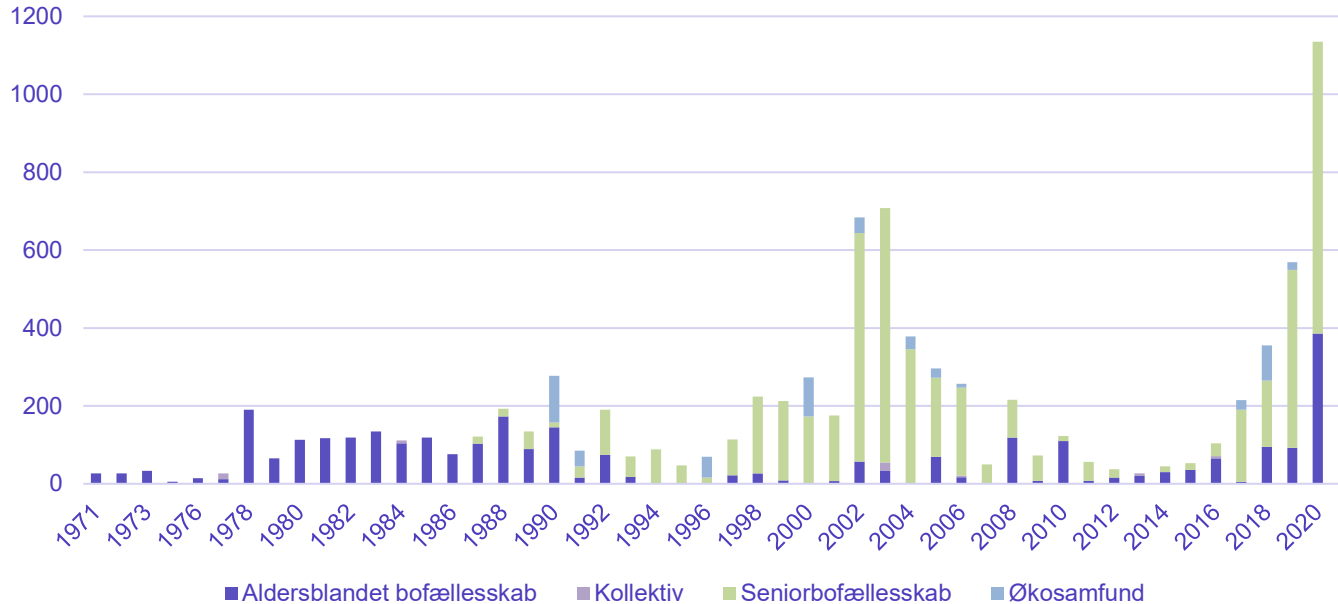
Target groups

- ▶ Students in cities with higher educations. Looking for affordable housing, can live with small spaces and more sharing
- ▶ International workforce in an international labor market, from high-paid ex-pats e.g. in consultant jobs, to low-paid workers in platform-jobs: Demanding community, private service, shared facilities and flexibility
- ▶ Young professionals: Takes longer to establish family, and do not need a permanent flat, but demands flexibility and community
- ▶ Couples being divorced and in need of a temporary dwelling – or a dwelling designed for single parents. Looking for community and shared facilities
- ▶ Elderly living longer and looking for access to city life, community and safety



Co-housing: And old, but growing housing concept.

- ▶ A large share of developer-driven co-housing from 2018
- ▶ Aiming at a broader group
- ▶ Many parallels to micro-housing
- ▶ Can it deliver affordable housing?



Key-words in developer-led co-housing

- ▶ "Turn-key projects"
- ▶ "Co-housing for ordinary people"
- ▶ "Voluntary community participation"
- ▶ "Design for spontaneous meetings"



Thanks for your attention. Questions?

