

Cohousing Models, Swedish & International

Prof. Emer. Dick Urban Vestbro, May 2014

Presentation based on

- Research on cohousing since 1964;
- Experience as an activist, chairman of Swedish association Cohousing NOW;
- Living in cohousing 18 years.

Cohousing = Residential bldgs with common spaces and shared facilities; private apts.
NOT communes or ecovillages

Content of presentation

- Cohouse Tullstugan, Stockholm
- The self-work model
- Motives for cohousing
- Stockholm initiatives
- Other Swedish models
- Swedish overview, tenure models
- Problems in cohousing
- Models in other countries



Tullstugan, Stockholm

- Initiated 1991 by group from old cohousing;
- Two staircases with 23 apartments, 1-4 room & kitchen units;
- Common spaces: kitchen, dining room, kids room, TV room, guest room (5% of total space)
- 52 adults, 16 teens, 8 kids below 12, incl. persons from neighbourhood; 18 men, 33 women (14 single);
- All adults must cook (except 2 who are exempted);
- Dinners 4 evenings a week;
- 5 cooking teams, 9-10 in each, responsible for one week each;
- 2 workloads in one's own week (4 h);
- **18 of 20 dinners we sit down at ready-made table!**



Italian cooking exercise

The Self-Work Model

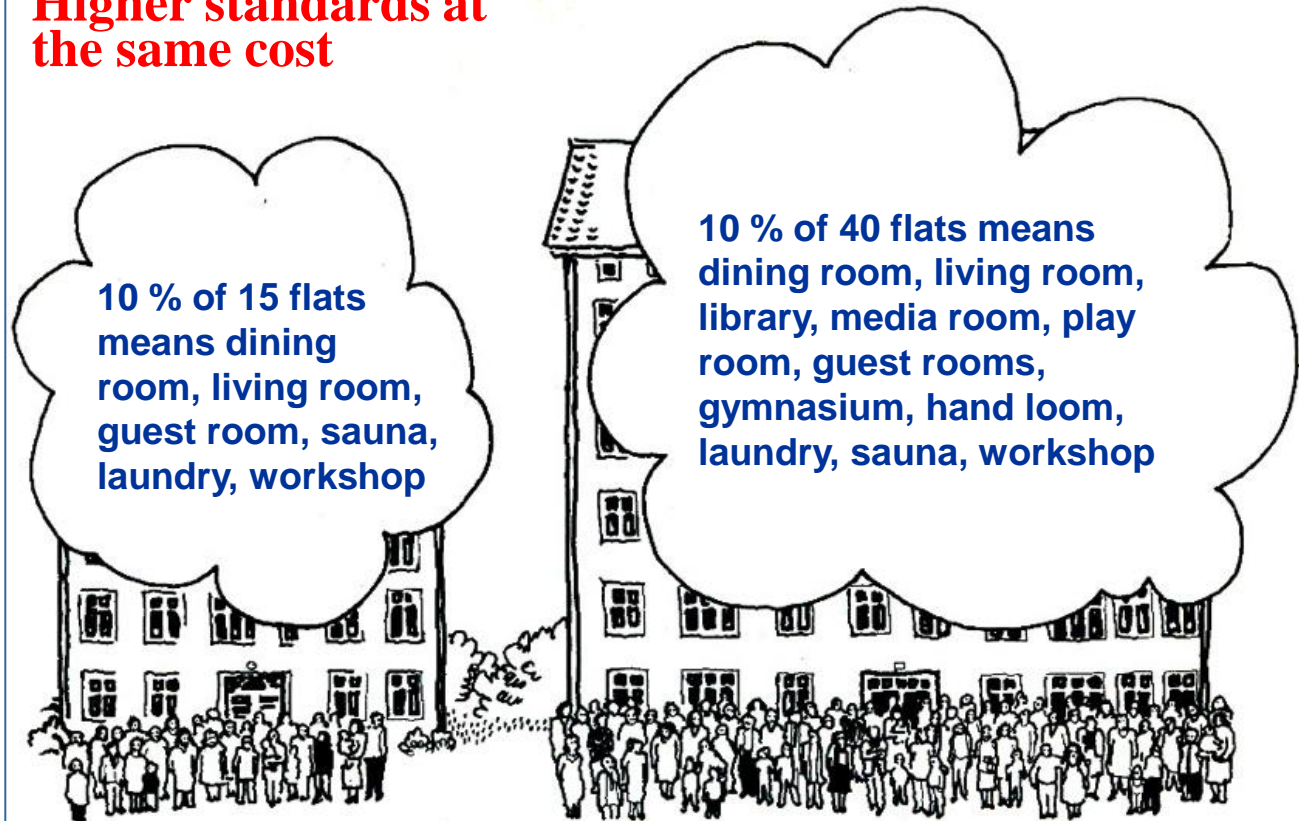
- ‘Living in Community’ group publishes book on the self-work model 1982.
- Housework to be carried out communally. Men to participate.
- Cooking often by oneself is boring – cooking less often with others is fun.
- Make municipal housing companies meet demands.



Higher standards at the same cost

10 % of 15 flats means dining room, living room, guest room, sauna, laundry, workshop

10 % of 40 flats means dining room, living room, library, media room, play room, guest rooms, gymnasium, hand loom, laundry, sauna, workshop

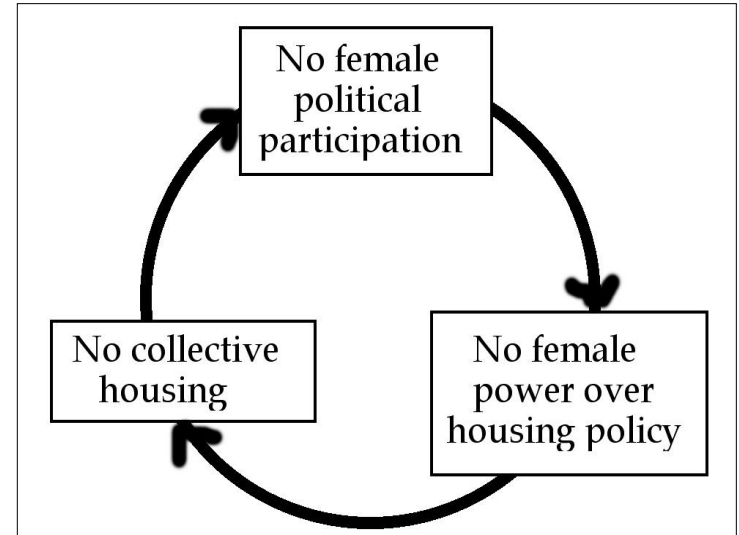


Cohousing – for gender equality

Reduced workloads at home is a prerequisite for equal status in economic and political life.

In cohousing men and women work on equal conditions.

The fate of the suburban housewife



A good environment for children

- No lonely children, all have "siblings";
- Parents help each other;
- It is easy to pass between apartments;
- An adult is always around;



Party, Tullstugan, Stockholm



Kid's play room, Blomstret, Gävle

Foto Niklas Krantz



Outdoor games,
Vildsvinet, Örebro

People with social contacts live longer

- Everyone decides how much she/he wants to participate.
- There is always someone at hand when required.
- Individualism may flourish, but one has to adapt to others.
- Women have survival strategies.



Invandrarkvinnor löper stor risk att drabbas av isolering i det svenska samhället, enligt psykologen Azra Abazari.

FOTO: CAROLINE TIBELL

Ensam får oftare psykbesvär

Lonely people are more often mentally disturbed.

än andra. Speciellt utsatta är kvinnor med utomeuropeisk
landsfödda mer än svenskfödda.
-Det finns andra forskare som
hon som att strida på två fronter:
mot den svenska kulturen och mot
En skilsmässa kan öka risken
för isolering, särskilt för kvinnor.
rande för Balans, en förening för
personer med depressioner och

Initiatives for cohousing in Stockholm

- Women's organisations demanded cohousing in the 1960s & 70s;
- Patriarchal resistance broken 1980;
- Motions in City Council;
- Vice-Mayor interested, civil servants active;
- Competition for cohousing 1981;
- 3 public housing companies ordered to build various types of cohouses, 20 of them;
- Agreements about self-administration under public rental tenure;

Vice-Mayor
Mats Hulth



Trekanten, 78 apartments, built 1986



Cigarrlådan, walk-up taken over 1987, 20 apartments



Fristad, built 1984, 133 apts,



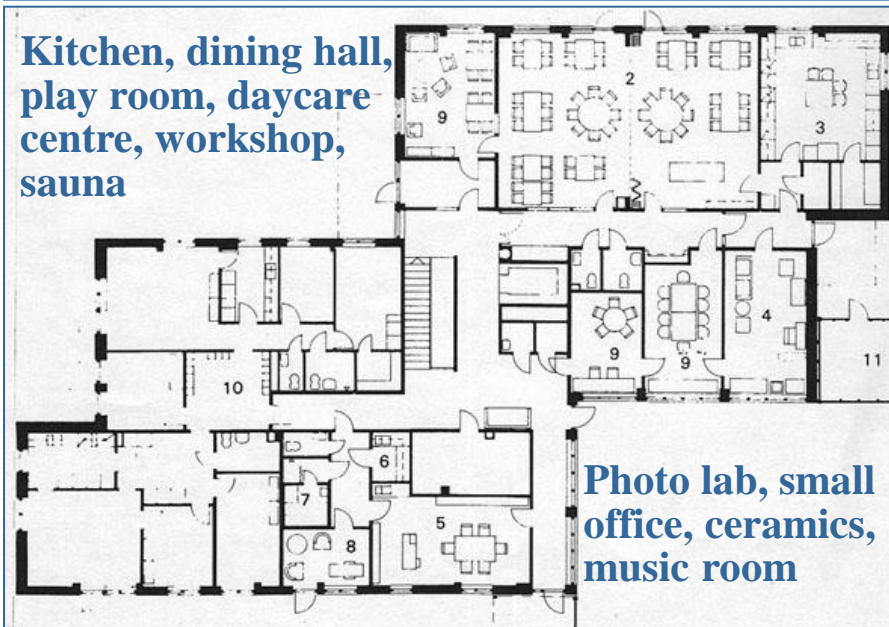
Tre Portar, 52 apts, built 1987

Prästgårdshagen, Älvsjö

- Built by municipal housing Co 1983, 33 apts
- Active participation of residents-to-be



**Kitchen, dining hall,
play room, daycare
centre, workshop,
sauna**



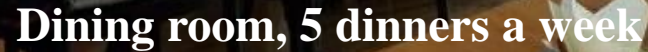
**Photo lab, small
office, ceramics,
music room**

**Easy to join
common activities, a certain social control exists**



**Residents
clean stair-
cases themselves**

- **43 apts built by public housing company Familjebostäder 1993.**
- **40+ without kids, sense of community and mutual support are main objectives.**
- **Resident participation in design.**
- **Communal spaces: central kitchen, dining room, exercise room, sauna, roof terrace, weaving, library, guest rooms, computer space, garden, workshop.**





**51 tenants 50 – 93 years old
25 % men, 75 % women**



-

The situation in Sweden today

Of 58 traced cohouses 15 have been decollectivized

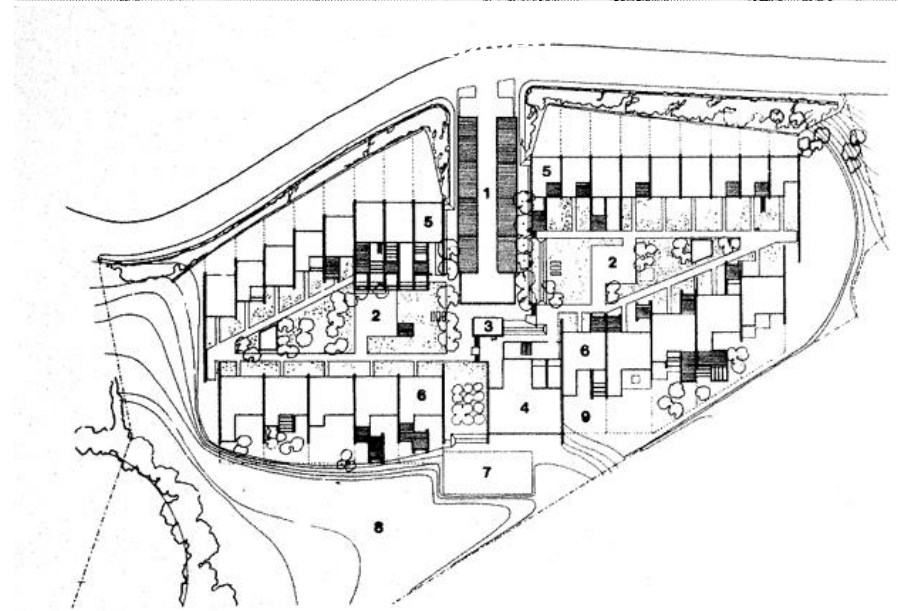
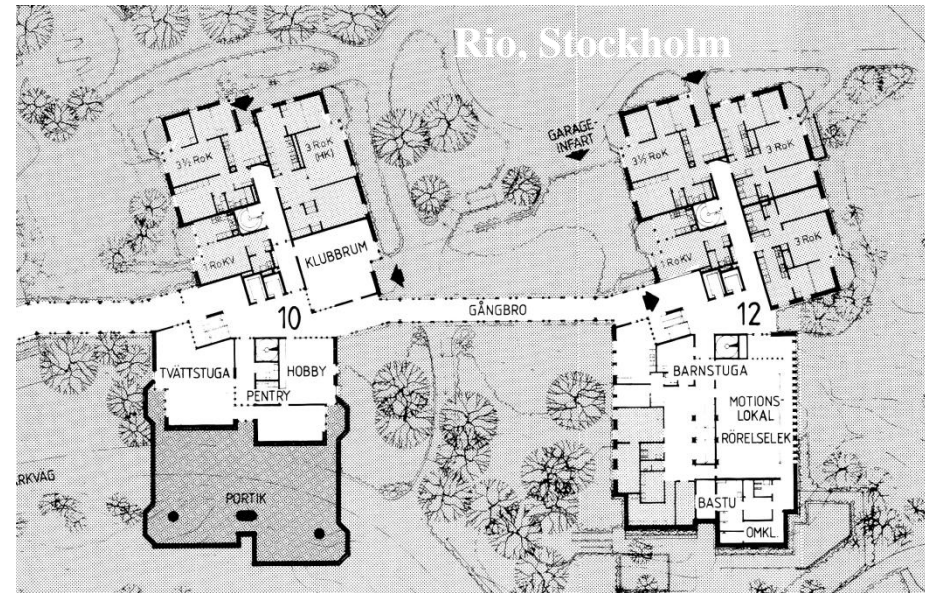
- 17 have reduced services

- 26 function as originally planned
(communes, ecovillages, 'collective villas',
production communes not counted)

40 self-work model, of which

- 7 for 'second half of life'
- 2 converted from services with employed staff
- 4 combined with municipal services
- *Others*: 1 combined with ecovillage, 1 group of 4 cohouses, 1 larger commune

- 24 public rental, 1 private rental, 11 condos, 7 coop rental
- 33 new constructions, 10 rebuilding



Any problems?

- Some cohouses have been decollectivized...
- ... mainly because regulations for recruitment of tenants were missing.
- Conflicts between residents exist.

Residents have to agree upon:

1. Organisation and content of meals;
2. Cleaning and order for kids;
3. Rules about participation in meetings, how to take decisions.

Establish a 'house culture'

- Rotation of responsibilities;
- Few but clear rules;
- Encourage initiatives;
- Positive attitude to variety;
- More important to compromise than to "get right".

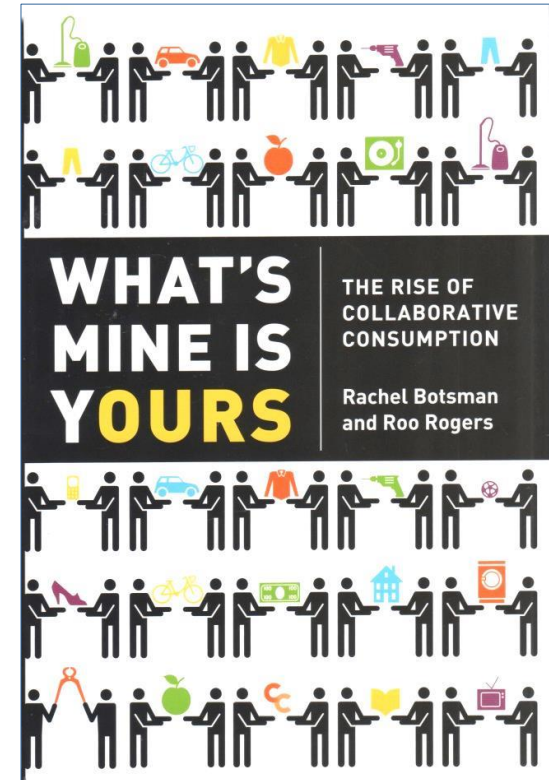


Save by sharing

”The Tragedy of the Commons”:

An individual is not motivated to act environmentally, but in a collective it is meaningful and fun to work for sustainable lifestyles.

In cohousing one can share things such as food, cooking, guest rooms, journals, books, tools, computer equipment, children’s clothes, toys etc.

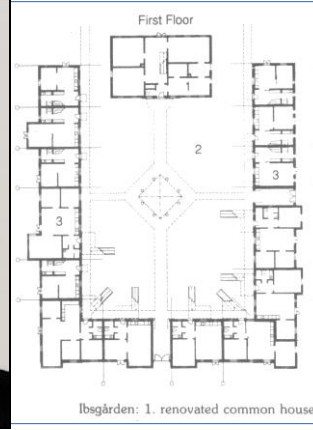
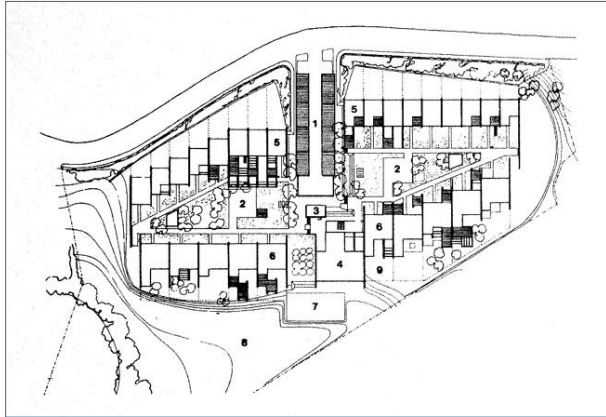


Cultivation in cohousing Fristad



Gardening, composting in
Prästgårdshagen

Denmark

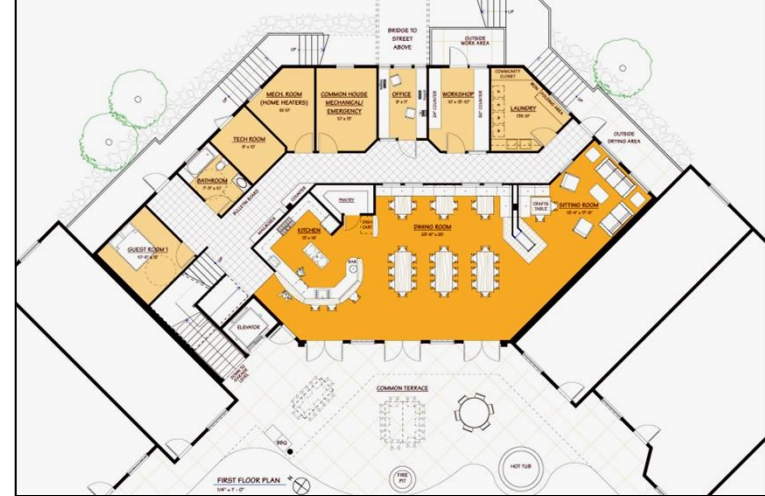


Cohousing, USA

- Influenced by Danish *bofaellesskab*
- Charles Durrett & Kathryn McCamant book *Cousing 1988*
- Emphasis on planning and designing together
- 220 projects listed in directory
- Part of Fellowship of Intentional Communities, FIC

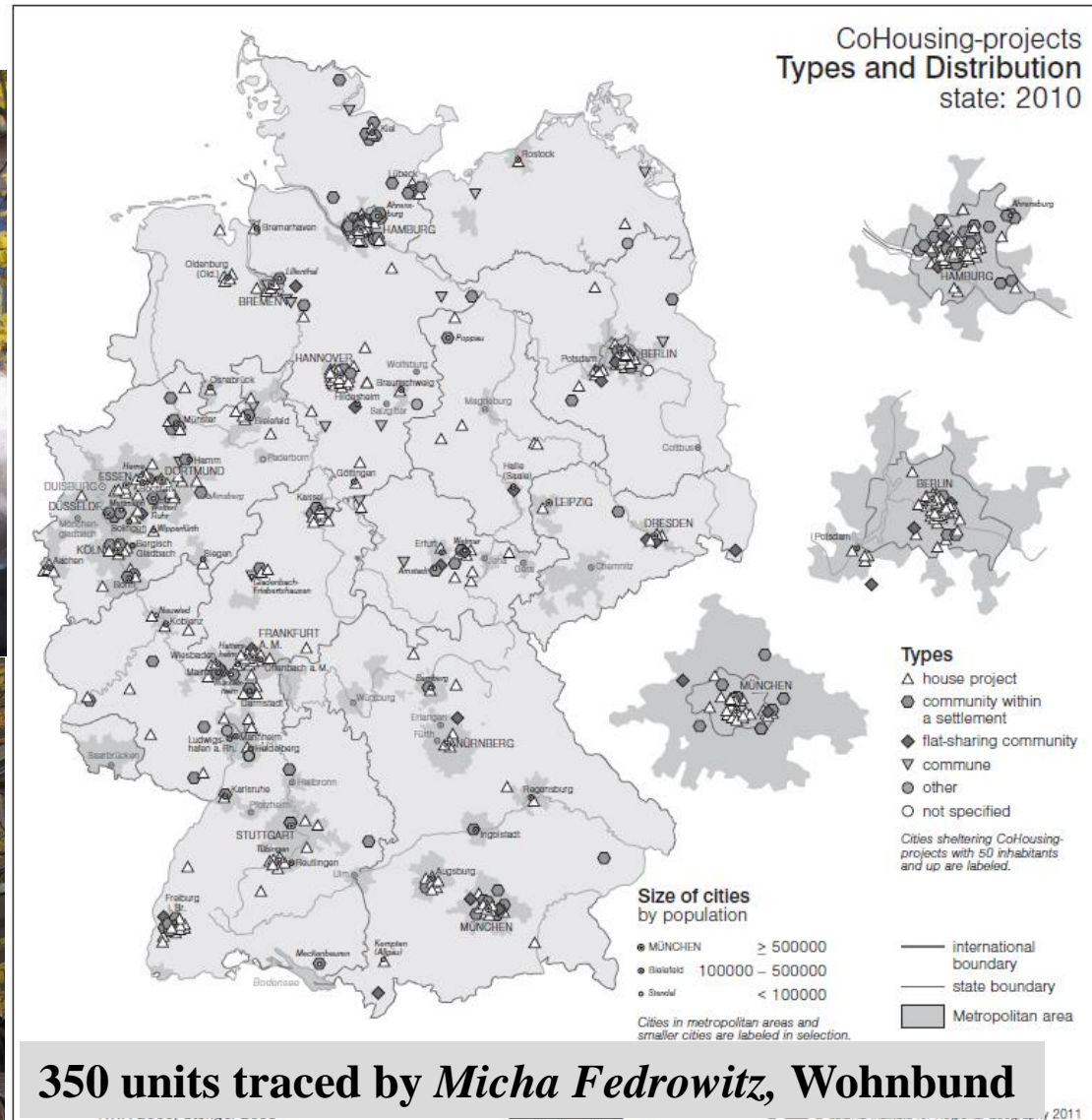
Frogsong, Cotati, California

- 78 persons, 30 families
- Designed by McCamant and Durrett
- Group started 1998, moved in 2003
- Common spaces: dining/meeting room, kitchen, guest rooms, children's room, workshop;
- Decision by consensus.



Germany

- Building communities, may lead to housing communities.
- Public support for land allocation & project management



Example from Hamburg

Greves Garten, Bergedorf

- Self-construction, preserve old building
- 21 apts, 53 adults, 42 children
- Common spaces: dining/meeting space, youth room, workshop, laundry, garden
- Planning since 1990, moving in 2007



Findhorn, Scotland

- Begun in 1962, NGO in 1997
- Learning with nature
- Changing world through changing lives
- Centre of Gaia Education Network
- Spiritual community, education centre, ecovillage
- Renewable energy, organic food, waste water treatment
- Conferences, guest house



Italy

- Network with thousands of members;
- Old experiences from **Comunità & Familia** (30 projects of Jesuit origin), **Social Clubs**;
- Building communities exist, but aim is cheap housing provision, not community after building;
- A handful of implemented cohousing projects;
- A dozen or more under planning.



Social Club i Turin

Cummunità di Berzano (common economy)



Numerozero, Turin

