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Housing and social (in)justice are tied together, even if we are unaware of this as the single family home and the suburban neighborhood have become accepted conditions. Multiple generations have become accustomed to this standard, and are not familiar with other housing alternatives that have been and are a successful option. One way to look at resolving social inequities and creating healthy societies is to reconsider the family home.

How shelter for a domestic life is shaped and relates to its surrounding community affects how individuals experience their life. Even today with relative comforts and higher standards of living due to technological advances and wealth based on exploitation of resources and of others, throughout the classes, many find their experience of life not satisfying in many basic ways—including housing and social interaction.



Collaborative Housing in Scandinavia and Western Europe

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Project Information

I visited collaborative housing developments in Oslo, Norway; Stockholm, Sweden; Rotterdam, Utrecht and Delft, Netherlands; Rennes and Angers, France and London, England. I visited both collaborative homes for independent persons and families as well as group homes for those needing more assistance. I visited homes in urban centers and in rural outskirts and small villages. I was offered group meals and guest rooms and shared apartments, within collaborative developments, as well as guest stays with architects and sociologists involved with the collaborative developments. I was also able to meet with architects and with many residents of collaborative housing, as well as with directors and care providers in assisted collaborative homes.

Hosts

Norway: Knut Isachsen Sweden: Dr. Dick Vestbro, Dr. Ingrid Sillen Holland: Dr. Anna Dijkhuis France: Samuel Lanoe UK: Ivan Kirby

Outcomes

As designers, planners, architects and policy—makers, the desire to shape a good life, a healthy community, and to support an equalitarian society (an American premise) with building patterns is a complex challenge. Looking into past and present housing within varying neighborhoods can expand the pattern of possibilities for achieving harmony that has been increasingly lacking today.

I created an article comparing the impetus for and the main differences of collaborative housing between countries. In my field placement following I facilitated a community housing assessment using photovoice for the residents of Detroit's Lower Eastside and presented the participants with urban planning and housing typologies including collaborative housing for their consideration.



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Classroom Connections

Theories of Urban Design

Policy and Evaluation

Community Org and Management

Comparative Cross national Analysis

Design Activism and Social Entrepreneurship

Lessons Learned

Positive aspects that I witnessed in the housing developments were social cohesion and a lack of isolation, childcare support for families and single parents, networking for many topics like employment, services, sharing vacations and cultural or shopping excursions, along with meal- sharing and hobby groups. There is a cost benefit to living in a smaller private domain in order to afford sharing many amenities as a group, which might otherwise be beyond the budgets of each individual resident.



Career Connections

I hope to work as a design activist and social entrepreneur working for humanitarian values regarding how the built environment affects wellbeing and social cohesion. Working to influence and change policy that will support healthy living for individuals and the environment I see working for the federal government as a possibility.



Advice

If you are interested in exploring a non-traditional topic, be prepared to spend a lot of time on the internet making inquiries. Find a great advisor to help you understand the parameters of making an independent study and assisting with references for scholarship applications. Apply for all scholarships that you are eligible for.

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