

LIVING IN CHANGE – SUSTAINABLE HOUSING DESIGN RESEARCH PROJECT with YH Kodit Housing Association

As cities condense, everyday living practices and needs for social interaction are changing. For example, aging, the day-to-day management of families with children, and the challenges of young and elderly people's independence and perceived loneliness are socially significant topical themes that lead to the development needs of living spaces and the living environment.

At present, the field of urban housing is shifting (e.g. working from home, living environment diversification, changing family structures etc.), with other significant shifts expected in the future in response to for example the climate crisis. There are more and more people living alone, and social disadvantages related to this might be minimised by various forms of communal housing. Clearly, housing is a key way to respond to people's needs as members of society. The spatial and functional characteristics of the living environment affect how the resident is able to function in everyday life. At a general level, residents need opportunities for voluntary action (autonomy needs), and social participation (social needs); both dimensions are significantly related to residents' well-being and health. All of these issues set new requirements for housing infrastructures and their functions, use and design of both the living environment and the dwellings themselves.

To that end ASUTUT, the Sustainable Housing Design research group are investigating the 6,500 dwelling stock owned by YH Kodit for a review of how their existing housing environment can meet the current challenges and future challenges. The goal is to produce information related to the physical environments and services of housing that supports YH Kodit in improving the quality of life of their residents. We will investigate multiple interconnected areas of the living environment in the project: 1) shared spaces, 2) private dwellings, 3) the adaptability of the housing stock, and 4) the potential for design adaptations and renovations. The research team brings comprehensive knowledge of the above factors and future prospects of change in Finnish urban housing as well as housing construction national practices, guidelines and legislation. The team approaches the needs of the everyday life of the residents and their possibilities through a dynamic perception of needs. Housing stock analysis, and qualitative participatory methods and design-based testing are used to investigate the current status of the YH Kodit stock, examining the use and functioning of private, semi-public and public spaces and the potential of buildings to adapt to changing individual and socio-cultural situations with lessons for the planning of new construction.

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