

► **How much is done collectively?** Those who live in the building decide this together. As well as preparing meals, there may be indoor and outdoor spaces to take care of or hobby- and gymnastic-groups, as well as child care groups.



What do we do if we go away for a long time? We are free to go away, but we must then see to it that somebody else takes over our normal duties. If we sub-let our apartment, we must see to it that the sub-tenant understands what living in cohousing means.

Does everyone have to eat in the dining-room? We may eat where we choose, but in many cohousing units one must belong to one of the cooking teams.

Are the meals expensive? It is usually possible to cook a good and nutritious meal for a very low price, often 20 to 35 Swedish crowns, but the price varies according to the standard which those who live there choose.



Are the people in collective buildings extremely environmentally aware? Some are, some aren't.

Is the collective building idea a left-wing idea? The ideas behind to-day's Swedish collective buildings originated in the left and alternative movements of the 1970s, but today most buildings do not expect their members to subscribe to any particular point of view. We are more interested in living in a way which we value, be this because it lightens housekeeping burdens, because it means more neighbourliness, or because it provides space for club activities. Few Swedish cohousing units are today politically homogeneous; they are homes for a broad spectrum of ideas.

A collective building is hardly a place for an individualist to live? We do need to be prepared to work together, but otherwise it is a good place for many different sorts of people. One can be very individualistic in a cohousing unit.

If cohousing is such a good idea, why are there so few of them?

There are many explanations, but principally:

- In Sweden there are still a lot of prejudices against collaborative housing, particularly amongst those who have never visited one and so have never seen how well it can work.
- When people in Sweden argue about how and where to live, they pay too little attention to what people can contribute to the place that they live in. We are so used to letting somebody else decide – a government body or a landlord.
- Bureaucratic rules about taxes, building finance or household forms are often difficult to understand, which makes it more difficult to arrange a cohousing unit.
- More collaborative housing would be built if there were more people who knew about them and wanted them.

Kollektivhus NU – a Swedish association

This is a non-governmental organisation for people interested in collaborative housing.

- We collect and distribute information about collective buildings,
- We are a forum where people can exchange their experiences,
- We encourage the construction of more cohousing units,
- We want an official queue list for people who would like to live collaboratively.
- People who do not yet live in a cohousing unit but who are interested in the idea are welcome as members of our association.

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TO LIVE IN COLLABORATIVE HOUSING

Can I have my toothbrush for myself?



The notice-board in Färdknäppen, a cohousing unit in Stockholm.

The atmosphere in a cohousing unit is lively and neighbourly.

But you can live as you please and you can have your own toothbrush.



To live in a collaborative housing

- A simpler day-to-day life



FOTO: INGRID SILLÉN

“Living in a collective building has many advantages”, says Johan Alm in the Södra Station cohousing unit in Stockholm. “It gives us more time for family life”.

- Neighbourliness and confidence



FOTO: KERSTIN KÄRNEKULL

We meet our neighbours when we eat our meals with them. Färdknäppen is a cohousing unit for people in the “second phase” of their lives.

- Men and women share the household work



FOTO: NIKLAS KARLSSON

Everyone helps with the cooking in cohousing. Here are some of the cooks at Tullstugan.

Facts about cohousing in Sweden

A cohousing unit is an ordinary multi-family building with ordinary apartments. But those who live there have also somewhere to cook and eat together, to pursue their hobbies or simply to meet one another.

There are many different sorts of collective housing. Some are for people of all ages, others are for those in the second phase of their lives, who no longer live with their children.

How does it work?

A communal kitchen and dining room is often the kernel of a cohousing unit. All the adults in the building belong to different groups, taking turns to cook for the whole building. Typically each group cooks twice every two or three weeks.



Cooking in Färdknäppen.

Questions and answers

Are there a lot of house rules? Every cohousing unit is different and each has its own rules.

Do those who live in a cohousing unit become very dependent on one another? In most buildings, everyone has to belong to a cooking team. Otherwise those who live there do not depend more on their neighbours than in an ordinary multi-family building. Each household has its own apartment.

Does each household have its own kitchen? The apartments are just like normal apartments, each with its own kitchen.

Is the food always vegetarian or special in some other way? Those who live in the building decide what they like to eat, but they often decide to have a vegetarian alternative every day.

Why choose to live in a cohousing unit? It gives opportunities not to be found in an ordinary multi-family building. It lightens the burden of buying food and cooking it. One meets one's neighbours and children find playmates and friends. Men and women work together at what has to be done in the building.



Children in Stolplyckan, Linköping.

To live collectively does not sound very decent – what do you actually do? There is a big difference between living in a cohousing unit and living in a commune. In a cohousing unit each household has its own apartment where he/she has a private life.

I am not good at cooking. Could I nevertheless live in a cohousing unit? The cooking is usually done by a team, so there is always someone who can help those who don't know what to do. The kitchen team also has other jobs, such as cleaning and washing up.