

# **Work, Community and Sustainability - Redefining Work through Cohousing**

**Teresa Rauscher**  
rauscher.teresa@gmail.com

Supervisors:

Tekn. Dr. Karin Grundström, Urban Studies, Malmö University  
Ph.Lic. Ann Åkerman, Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies

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# Abstract

The prevailing view on work excludes unpaid activities like care, individual or community work although they are crucial for economy and everyday life. Because the focus on paid work also leads to both social and environmental unsustainability, work has to be redefined. Cohousing evolved from the belief that through a collective organisation with a specific built and social environment, care work can become appreciated and facilitated. Hence, this thesis examines how cohousing today contributes to an extended view on work through a qualitative analysis of interviews with cohousing experts as well as participant observations of and focus group interviews with two cohouses in Austria and Sweden. The study shows that in cohousing the key to a redefinition of work is its community work, taking place at an intermediary level which is located between the private family and public spheres. Community work is more visible, pleasant and appreciated which is facilitated by a particular structure, physical space and a well-functioning community of a certain size. Furthermore, it allows a fairer distribution of work between women and men, facilitates family work, enables financial savings and strengthens the group. This study aims to reinforce the discussion of redefining work within Sustainability Science, where it is not a major topic despite its complex and transdisciplinary nature. By giving a practical approach to a redefinition of work, the findings contribute to an understanding of work and support the further development of cohousing.

**Keywords:** Redefining Work, Mixed Work [*Mischarbeit*], Cohousing, Community Work [*Gemeinschaftsarbeit*], Sustainability Science

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The Prevalent Notion of Work and its Exclusion of Unpaid Activities

The majority of people organise their daily life around the construct of “normal work” (Hildebrandt 2003, 384) that centres paid work and leaves aside other activities although they are crucial for the economy and society (Biesecker 2000, 5). Paid work has become central to society due to technical and social shifts in the early modern era and industrialisation (Hildebrandt 2007). The public sector became seen as the only economically productive industrial labour site (Taylor 2004, 31). For instance for Marx, production is every activity that is goal-oriented and satisfies human needs whereby he referred to only paid work as only paid work is exchanged on the market and gives surplus value (Bryson 2005, 128-129). Thus, the private domestic sphere became considered for non-economic reproduction activities which are not considered valuable (ibid., 129). It was men who worked for the industry and women responsible for the private domestic sphere, thus the definition of work has become exclusive, gendered and spatially separated (Craig 2012, 456).

Still today, more than 200 years later, this perception of work prevails. Most politicians and researcher have been using the term work synonymously with paid work (Taylor 2004, 31) and define unpaid activities as “non-productive” or in the best case “reproductive” (Biesecker and v. Winterfeld 2010, 4). Unpaid activities are labelled valueless, unappreciated and as unquestioned preconditions for the existence of the market (Biesecker 2000, 2). Furthermore, these activities rarely occur in the societal debate about work (Brandl 2002, 20) even though every person spends on average an equal amount of hours in paid and unpaid work activities (Craig 2012, 458). However, men spend more minutes per day in paid work (OECD 2011, 136) and thus what society calls “normal work” is often mainly a male normality (Hildebrandt 2003, 384). Despite initiatives for gender-equality (Majstorovic and Lassen 2011, 2), women in Europe spend on average 2,5 hours more per day time in unpaid work than men<sup>1</sup>, whereby the biggest gap is in taking care of children (OECD 2011, 137). This leads to a double burden because women are, in addition to being the main person in charge for care work, also expected to work full-time (Littig and Spitzer 2011, 67-68), although being socially and economically disadvantaged (Barcelona Provincial Council 2006, 148).

Focusing on paid work does not only bring about social unsustainability like gender-inequalities

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<sup>1</sup>This includes Austria where women spend about 1,5 hours more and Sweden where women spend about an hour more in unpaid work (OECD nd).

and an increase in life-style diseases (e.g. depression and burn-out because of performance pressure and long working hours) (Nierling 2013, 11), but it also leads to environmental unsustainability. The construct of “normal work” is coupled with an economic model that is oriented towards maximisation of income to satisfy the basic needs through a resource-intense consumption (Brandl 2008, 112) which contributes to environmental destruction (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 1). Goods and services in turn determine the societal status (Biesecker 2000, 3), thus also linking societal participation to paid work (Hildebrandt 2003, 385). Hence, centering paid work results in a dependence on the market and the state which in turn lowers individual social security. Although unpaid activities would help to guarantee basic care also in economic crises (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 14), the prevailing response to economic instability and its resulting high unemployment is not in promoting and highlighting the importance of other forms of work. The solution is seen in economic growth, reduction of working costs and an extension of working hours (Littig and Spitzer 2011, 71) leading to further social and environmental unsustainability although it has become obvious long time ago that nature may not be able to sustain further economic growth (see Meadows et al. 1992).

## **1.2 Research Questions and Aims**

Various propositions, especially from a feminist perspective, have been made to overcome the centrality of paid work and reach a holistic understanding of work by visualising all forms of work (see Nierling 2013, 28-36; Taylor 2004, 34). Simultaneously, there have been beliefs since the 19th century that the built environment can support various forms of work in our daily lives (see Hayden 1982). Today’s researcher and practitioners argue that infrastructural prerequisites like intermediary spaces (Nierling 2010b, 4) - laying inbetween the private household and the large society - and forms of shared housing (Biesecker 2000, 12) have to be created to achieve a redefinition of work. Cohousing, a form of shared housing which combines individual housing with community by sharing spaces and facilities and working together, provides such an intermediary level.

Hence, set in the context of the two cohouses *Fiolen* in Sweden and *Lebensraum* in Austria, the main research question and its sub-research question are:

### **How does cohousing contribute to a redefinition of work?**

- (1) How do cohousing residents understand the term work? What forms of work do they see?
- (2) How do cohousing residents organise community work?
- (3) What are the benefits and challenges of community work?

(4) Is community work appreciated? How?

(5) Is community work distributed fairly between women and men? What enables this?

The study aims to reinforce the discussion of redefining work within Sustainability Science. By giving a practical approach to a theoretical discourse on the redefinition of work, the findings contribute to an understanding of work and support the further development of cohousing. The outreach and impact of my thesis is broadened by the cooperation with the Austrian Institute for Sustainable Development with which I partly developed the topic and theoretical perspective of the thesis<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.3 Content and Structure

The thesis continues with methodological considerations in Section 2. Subsequently, it unfolds its theoretical framework for a redefinition of work in Section 3. I discuss a reconceptualisation of work towards sustainability by using the analytical concept of Mixed Work to exemplify what an extended view on work could look like and how individuals can contribute. Section 4 gives first a brief historical review of cohousing because this thesis builds on the fact that cohousing derived amongst others as a response to the prevailing unsustainable view on work. It also describes briefly the development of the intermediary level, which acts as basis for cooperation between the cohousing households, and introduces today's cohousing. Section 5 describes cohousing in Austria and Sweden as well as introduces the cases Lebensraum and Fiolen. Subsequently the study's findings are presented and discussed (Section 6). I analyse if and how a holistic view on work is practically achieved in the cohouses compared to how it could theoretically be achieved as an individual on the basis of the concept of Mixed work. Section 7 sums up the most important findings by discussing cohousing's potentials to contribute to sustainability when it comes to an extended view on work and gives suggestions for further research.

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<sup>2</sup>The institute's related research project "*Sustainable Living and Working in a Cohousing Project: a Comparative, Practice Theory-Oriented Analysis*" is a study about practices of unpaid work in an Austrian cohousing project before and after the move-in supported by funds of the Österreichische Nationalbank ([http://oin.at/?page\\_id=1434-ID&lang=en](http://oin.at/?page_id=1434-ID&lang=en)). The results will be published in 2015.

## **2 Methodology**

### **2.1 Sustainability Science, Ontology and Epistemology**

My research process is guided by Sustainability Science which is inter- and transdisciplinary dealing with persistent complex problems, oriented towards solutions and aiming to achieve change (see Lang et al. 2012; Jäger 2009). I apply an interdisciplinary approach because the study's bases are drawn from various disciplines, among others sociology, built environment, gender and feminist studies. Further, the study has transdisciplinary elements since the knowledge created is descriptive, normative and practice-oriented contributing to solving "life-world problems" (Pohl and Hirsch 2008, 112). Furthermore, the topic for the thesis is partly based on the ideas of the Austrian Institute for Sustainable Development which saw the practical and scientific need for research on cohousing and its organisation of work. For example, according to Vestbro and Horelli (2012, 331), it has not yet been investigated to what extent cohousing reduces or enables a fair distribution of housework between women and men. I consider redefining work as a complex problem as it ranges from an economic, political, societal to an individual level. Dealing with redefining something is inherently change-oriented and since this thesis exemplifies what a redefinition could look like from an individual level it becomes solution-oriented.

Being oriented towards change, I take a critical realist standpoint on my ontological and epistemological considerations. Critical realism identifies the status quo and the requirements to achieve a changed status (Bryman 2008, 15). Being a critical realist, I accept a complex reality and the existence of a real world independent of our experiences but at the same time acknowledge constructivism and science's social embedding and imperfect nature (Clark 2008, 168). I consider gender-inequalities and women's subordination to men as a social and cultural construct (see Rosaldo 1974), therefore I am also influenced by a feminist point of view which also focuses on achieving social change (Jones and Budig 2008, 371).

### **2.2 Qualitative Approach**

I selected a qualitative approach because it allows me to better understand and see through the eyes of the study participants (Bryman 2008, 398) as well as enables individual interpretations (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, 3). Through qualitative research I am positioned in a real-world context by being in direct contact with the study participants (ibid.), which might provoke the participants to reflect on the topic.

## 2.3 Case Study Research

The thesis' research strategy takes the form of a multiple-case study as it is best suited to describing and explaining presumed linkages within a real-life context (Yin 2009, 19-20). The multiple-case design allows "cross-case" conclusions and a replication of the results (ibid., 53-57). The cases are the cohouses Lebensraum in Gänserndorf, Austria and Fiolen in Lund, Sweden. These cohouses were chosen on the basis of an information-oriented case selection which means that I expected them to have a high information content (Flyvbjerg 2006, 230). Furthermore, I selected the cohouses because they resemble one another in their structure and organisation which enabled me to draw conclusions from both houses and at the same time gives the cohouses the possibility to learn from each other. I do not aim to compare the cohouses but rather explain the reasons for their differences. The unit of analysis is community work in the cohouses. The choice of countries was based on practical reasons of being familiar with both countries and because they differ in its cohousing development, public and political awareness and support. Therefore, the thesis gives an additional bonus of learning from two different countries.

## 2.4 Methods

In addition to secondary sources, I used primary sources derived from the focus group interviews, supported by observations and supplemented by interviews of cohousing experts.

### 2.4.1 Expert Interviews

To begin with, in order to familiarise with the cohousing setting, and understand the cohousing development in Austria and Sweden, I conducted four unstructured interviews (Bryman 2008, 438) with cohousing experts in Sweden and Austria. I used unstructured interviewing because the aim was rather a loose conversation and the focus was different in each interview.

I met **Dick Urban Vestbro** in Stockholm on February 04, 2013 to talk about Sweden's cohousing history, status quo and future development. Dick, who lives in a cohousing in Stockholm, is not only the chairman of the Swedish association *Kollektivhus NU* (see Subsection 5.2) but is also, as an architect and professor emeritus at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, involved in research on cohousing since the 1960s.

In order to get first hand information about the importance and development of the intermediary level and cohousing, I interviewed **Kerstin Kärnekull** and **Gunilla Lundahl** in Stock-

holm on February 05, 2013. Kerstin is an architect who lives in the cohousing Färdknäppen. Gunilla, a journalist and former chief editor, lived in a first generation cohousing until the 1970s. Both formed and were active in the BiG research network (see Subsection 4.2). The interview with these two women was recorded and transcribed.

To understand Austria's current cohousing development, I met **Ernst Gruber** in Vienna on February 22, 2013. Ernst, an architect, is the chairman of the *Initiative für gemeinschaftliches Bauen und Wohnen* (see Subsection 5.1) and has valuable knowledge about Vienna's cohousing scene.

### 2.4.2 Participant Observation

I wanted to understand the organisation of community work in order to make the focus group interviews more efficient. Thus, I participated in three common dinners and experienced cooking for 27 cohousing residents in Fiolen whilst talking informally to residents and taking notes. The participant observation enabled me to familiarise myself with the setting which cannot be merely reached by studying literature (Kvale 2007, 8).

### 2.4.3 Focus Group Interviews

In a focus group, qualitative data is collected from homogeneous participants in a group discussion setting through their interaction (Krüger and Casey 2009, 15) stimulated by a facilitator. The aim of the two focus group interviews was to bring forth a broad spectrum of also spontaneous and emotional points of views (Kvale 2007, 7). I conducted the first focus group interview with seven cohousing residents of the cohousing Lebensraum, Gänserndorf in Austria on February 23, 2013 and the second with five cohousing residents of the cohousing Fiolen, Lund in Sweden on March 09, 2013. Since two Fiolen residents did not have time for the focus group interview, I interviewed them individually on March 09, 2013 as I believe that everyone's views are valuable. Although this was a different setting, I tried to ask them the same questions as in the focus group interviews and thus consider their responses in the analysis equally to the focus group interviews. The participants of each group joined because of their own interest and time. In both cohouses all residents were invited by e-mail. In Fiolen, I also hung up a note on the blackboard. I also personally invited the residents I talked to at the dinners I participated in.

A survey on socio-demographic data (see Table 1) revealed that while in Lebensraum the number of men dominated, it was the opposite in Fiolen. In both case studies, the age dis-

tribution was quite broad, all were of working age. Interestingly, in Fiolen most worked full-time, those who did not were self-employed, half were on parental leave and studying. In contrast, in Lebensraum one participant was unemployed, one employed full-time, one freelancer and the rest worked half time.

**Table 1: Socio-economic data of the participants.**

<b>Cohouse Lebensraum</b>	<b>Cohouse Fiolen</b>
7 male, 2 female	2 male, 5 female
Most work half-time	Most work full-time
8 have a university degree	4 have a university degree
Mainly couples with young children	Diverse household compilation

The focus group interviews were structured by guiding questions (Krüger and Casey 2009, 38). Although I tried to be flexible and open to where the discussion led, I needed a structure to be able to compare the cases (Bryman 2008, 440). I developed the questions on the basis of the concept of Mixed Work: I wanted to be able to compare the residents' understandings and definitions of work with those developed by the concept of Mixed Work; I asked about benefits and disadvantages of community work to better understand it and to draw conclusions about opportunities and obstacles when it comes to redefining work; I interviewed the residents about appreciation and distribution of community work between women and men which is a crucial factor when it comes to achieving Mixed Work. To better ensure validity and reliability (Krüger and Casey 2009, 202), I received feedback from my supervisors and the Austrian Institute of Sustainable Development, and I pilot-tested some of the questions. As more than a week passed in between the two interviews, I had time to improve the structure. Furthermore, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. Since I want to keep the interviewees' identities anonymous, I do not use their real names in the text.

For the analysis, I used the replication approach to a multiple-case study as illustrated in Yin (2009, 56-58). After selecting the cases and conducting the study, I first looked at each case individually and afterwards drew cross-case conclusions. While doing so I followed a qualitative data analysis by developing themes, codes, and categories to structure the data (based on Bryman 2008, 550). Hence, I used abductive reasoning, the procedure of bringing data together with ideas (Richardson and Kramer 2006, 500), by using the best available information (Lipscomb 2012, 251) to analyse the data.

## 2.5 Personal Reflections of the Research

The focus group interview of the cohousing Lebensraum was conducted in German, whereas the analysis in English<sup>3</sup>. This could compromise the validity of the study as the translations are based on my personal understanding. The interviews with the cohousing Fiolen were conducted in English, leading to the limitation that only people who are confident in English had joined the discussion which could be a selection bias and lower the reliability. According to one interviewee, more residents would have joined if it had been held in their native language. Also, the understanding of the term work is influenced by culture and language. For instance, according to one participant, the term homework which does not include work in its Swedish translation [*hemläxa*]. The number of participants (7 in each house) might be rather small considering that there are 35 adults in Fiolen and 46 in Lebensraum. Nonetheless, the participants represented the variety of household composition, the educational status (see Table 1) and both focus group interviews together represent an equal amount of women and men. Furthermore, the questions relating the distribution of community work between women and men might be influenced to a small degree by the fact that both female and male residents took part in the discussion. To investigate women's or men's points of view, women and men should be interviewed separately (Krüger and Casey 2009, 116). Lastly, myself as a researcher potentially influenced the study as I am in favour of the concept of cohousing and thus might tend to be biased. I dealt with cohousing and the subject of redefining work for the first time although my background is not in architecture, sociology or gender studies. But as a Sustainability Scientist, I believe I have the ability to better see the "big picture", draw from and bring together various disciplines as well as constantly search for solutions for social change.

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<sup>3</sup>Also the direct used citations are translations to English.



### 3 Reconceptualising Work: The Concept of Mixed Work

Various propositions have been made in the last few decades concerning how to overcome the centrality of paid work and reach a holistic understanding of work (see Nierling 2013, 28-36). Especially feminist research demanded that housework has to be upgraded, i.e. appreciated and included in the concept of work, and redistributed (Lutz 2007, 178; Taylor 2004, 34). Biesecker (2000), also from a feminist perspective who demands a “plurality of work”, was one of the first to include aspect of externalising economic activities from the environment and the society to the debate. Brandl and Hildebrandt (2001), based on preceding propositions of redefining work, developed the concept of *Mixed Work* (original *Mischarbeit*) which is considered as one of the few attempts from a sustainability perspective and therefore gives the theoretical framework for this study.

#### 3.1 Four Segments of Work

Mixed Work describes four segments of work (see Figure 1), referring to the individual from a daily and biographical perspective. It indicates various forms of work that can occur at the same time, different individual combinations, and the alteration of these combinations because of biographical changes. (Hildebrandt 2003, 390)



Figure 1: *The four segments of Mixed Work based on Brandl and Hildebrandt (2001, 13).*

**Paid Work** [*Erwerbsarbeit*] is the production of goods and services for the market in order to earn income (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 12). Thus, the organisational principle is income generation (Hildebrandt 2003, 390). **Care work** [*Versorgungsarbeit*] refers to care-taking activities i.e. the care of sick family members, elderly care and child care as well as taking care of the household, thus housework is subsumed into care work. Its organisational principle is caring (ibid.). **Individual work** [*Eigenarbeit*] is self-determined and benefit-oriented work (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 12) in which goods to care of one's own are produced (Biesecker 2000, 7). Thus, the organisational principle is subsistence (Hildebrandt 2003, 390) but also autonomy (Biesecker 2000, 7). In **community work** [*Gemeinschaftsarbeit*], common goods and services are produced for others without payment (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 12). Its organisational principle is self-help and solidarity (Hildebrandt 2003, 390). Often, voluntary work is used synonymous to community work (see for example Williams and Nadin 2012, 2). I decided to translate the German term *Gemeinschaftarbeit* with community work although that might not fully reflect what it stands for. Whereas *Gemeinschaft* refers to social interaction, common beliefs and following a common goal (Duden 2013), *community* adds a common geographical location between the participants (Oxford English Dictionary 2013). However, *Gemeinschaftarbeit* is not necessarily about voluntary work for the own social network or community group, but includes any voluntary work that in the broadest sense benefits the society.

However, it is difficult to exactly define unpaid work (Craig 2012, 458), not only because borders between the segments of unpaid work are blurry but also because the border to leisure and recreational activities are hard to define. Mixed Work is based on the definition of work as developed by Kambartel (1994, 126) who defines societal work as an “activity dedicated to others, which takes part in the societal exchange of goods and services at a general level” (in Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 12). Thus, the reference to the social benefit of work for others is crucial i.e. the motivation for an activity are shared goals and not only the own person (like for leisure activities) (Nierling 2013, 28). However, this would excludes individual work. Also, recreation or idleness can be part of paid work or contribute to all forms of work. Work for others can at the same time be recreation (e.g. gardening). Therefore, I would like to revise Kambartel's definition by adding Schmid's (2006, 32) understanding: “work as everything that a human performs with regard to him and his life to be able to live a good life (in Kopatz 2012, 27). Another difficulty is the mutual dependency of unpaid and paid work. Unpaid work makes paid work possible but also vice-versa, market activities are the prerequisite for unpaid care work (Notz 2003, 425). Furthermore, some unpaid activities can

be, and already are, to a certain degree substituted by the market or the state, making paid and unpaid work interchangeable (Wolf 2004, 9).

### **3.2 Achieving a Holistic View on Work as an Individual**

Mixed Work, including the propositions for a plurality of work by Biesecker (2000) on which Mixed Work is based (Brandl 2008, 116), provided the theoretical framework for my analysis. Primarily, I examined if a holistic view on work is practically achieved in the cohousing and related this to how it could be theoretically achieved as an individual (see Figure 2). First of all, individuals can contribute by being aware and understanding all forms of work. “Only a change of awareness towards unpaid working activities would allow a reconfiguration of working activities on daily or biographical basis.” (Nierling 2010a, 4) Also, they can contribute by creating links between the different forms of work. First, an intrapersonal link means that everyone should be enabled to take part in all forms of work (Biesecker 2000, 14). This should be based on individual combinations because how Mixed Work is organised is dependent on the individual, according to age, stages of life or personal preferences (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 12). It can be achieved through reducing paid work hours or flexible work models (Biesecker 2000, 11,14). However, Brandl (2008, 118) emphasises that paid work still has to be the central segment of work and cannot be replaced by other segments. The reason for this is because in addition to providing individual income security, paid work has a psycho-social function, it is the basis for welfare state amenities and the prerequisite for societal integration (Littig and Spitzer 2011, 68-69). Second, an interpersonal link can be achieved by redistributing all segments of work equally between women and men, for instance, with more men in care and more women in paid work (Biesecker 2000, 14). Third, an intersectorial link refers to a link between production and reproduction (ibid., 14) e.g. doing paid work from home.

Furthermore, appreciation/recognition<sup>4</sup> of unpaid work is considered one of the key factors to allow a plurality of work. All segments of work have to be appreciated as equally important, useful and valuable to society (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 5; Biesecker 2000, 7,13). According to the theoretical approach on recognition by Honneth (1994), recognition can be classified into an institutional, performance-related and personal dimension. The first two dimensions take place in the public sphere, whereas personal recognition takes place in

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<sup>4</sup>Simplified, I use the terms *appreciation* and *recognition* interchangeably (see also Oxford English Dictionary 2013) because the German term *Anerkennung* used in the concept of Mixed Work, is translated both with appreciation and recognition.

the private sphere through personal relationships and love (Nierling 2012, 243). The first dimension refers to institutionalised recognition in human rights or through “specific laws for different social groups” (ibid., 242). In the second dimension, recognition comes from individual performance and achievements which contribute to societal goals and is visualised by rights, the distribution of resources like payment, and by appreciating individual skills and competences (ibid., 242-243). Whereas paid work receives institutional recognition e.g. through laws for workers in employment and performance-related recognition e.g. through payment, societal positions or status, unpaid work’s recognition is more fragile (Nierling 2010b, 4). It does not have equal and full treatment in law and depends on informal qualities, which are difficult to measure, and interpersonal recognition becomes more relevant (ibid.)

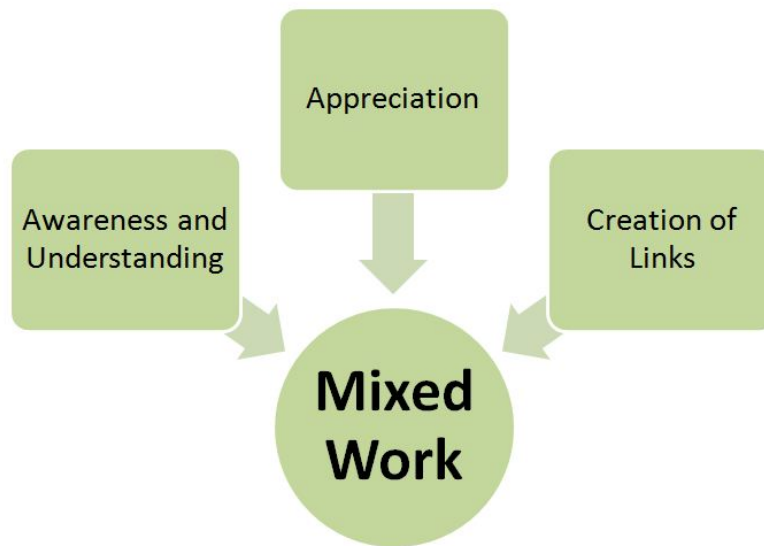


Figure 2: *The individual's contribution to Mixed Work.*

Individuals and household play a crucial role in the reconceptualisation of work because individuals make up society and contribute to a value and socio-cultural change which is needed to achieve a holistic view (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 10). However, it has to be acknowledged that a new understanding of work is not only the result of individual choices (Taylor 2004, 43). Individuals have to be supported by a public discussion of new paradigms of work (Nierling 2012, 242), new valuations and new criteria of the “good life” have to be communicated combined with structural and financial incentives (Biesecker 2000, 15-16).

## 4 Development of Cohousing and Today's Definitions

### 4.1 The First Cohousing Generation

Several feminists in Europe and the U.S.A. in the beginning of the 19th century saw the importance of the built environment in order to overcome the undervaluation of reproductive activities, the dual view on household and public space as well as women being oppressed and isolated (Bryson 2005, 131; Hayden 1982, 39). They realised that a spatial transformation of the domestic workplace as well as a more collective organisation is necessary (ibid., 10,12). For instance Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, both communitarian socialists, established programmes to reorganise communities to combat capitalist consequences such as women's isolation and oppression at home (ibid., 6). Feminist Marie Stevens Howland's kitchenless houses and apartment hotels (ibid., 91) were implemented in the first half of the 20th century in Vienna, Berlin, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Helsinki (Horelli and Vepsä 1994, 209). The idea of the first generation was to have as little housework for the individual as possible by outsourcing parts of it and introducing common facilities, but not to create community (Altus 1995, 56). Men's role and share of housework was not questioned because women considered the house as their sphere and "accepted the conclusion that men were unwilling to become involved" (ibid., 58).

### 4.2 The Second Generation - Cohousing as an Intermediary Level

On the basis of this first generation of cohousing, the feminist movement from the 1960s developed the second generation by changing the focus from outsourcing housework to collaborating (Horelli and Vepsä 1994, 210).

The nordic *BiG - Bo i Gemenskap* [living in community] network drove the cohousing development by framing the concept of the *New Everyday Life* (see NEL (The Research Group for the New Everyday Life and Nordic Council of Ministers) 1991). The concept is based upon the assumption by Heller (1994) and Bech-Joergensen (1988). For them, the basis of our everyday life are the daily reproductive and repetitive activities which are connected to the built environment that either improves or restricts the activities (Horelli and Vepsä 1994, 205). Hence, the built environment becomes the basis for everyday activities and can directly bring about change (ibid., 206). However, the traditional household is too small to address problems like undervaluation of housework and over-representation of women (NEL 1991, 15) and the local infrastructure is often not enough to support women in their daily activities

(Horelli 2006, 79). Thus, there is the need to create another social basis as well as a physical and organisational condition for a cooperation between households (NEL 1991, 27). This would mean transferring some of the daily activities that are usually done individually and isolated in the private sphere or to high costs for the public sector to a middle arena, the so-called *intermediary level* (Horelli and Vepsä 1994, 207).

The intermediary level refers to a new geographical, physical and organisational level located between the private family and the public spheres with units that are bigger than the private household but smaller than the municipality (Horelli and Vepsä 1994, 209). Hence, its competencies and resources are bigger than traditional households because it involves more people and at the same time it is about “closeness and first hand experience” because it is smaller than the large society (NEL 1991, 10). For the intermediary level, geographical nearness in form of a shared meeting place is the basis for cooperation (ibid., 17). A focus should be on the proximity between the dwelling, work and recreation, between reproduction and production, as well as between the different age groups and between women and men (ibid., 9-10). Since cohousing’s characteristics constitute the intermediary level (ibid., 24-26), it can be seen as a practical example of an intermediary level.

### **4.3 Cohousing Today**

During the emergence of the second generation of cohousing, mainly in Scandinavia, a comprehensive research on the Danish *bofaelleskaber* [living community] by the architects McCamant and Durrett (1989) brought the concept to the U.S. and coined the term *cohousing* (Millonig et al. 2010, 20) which further spread over to the English-speaking nations. In the beginning, the second generation cohousing were mainly aimed at families with children (interview with Dick Urban Vestbro). These household compilations were altered by the changing society - societal and demographic changes including individualisation and single-society - in the 1990s (Gutmann 2008, 114) resulting in a decreased interest in cohousing (interview with Dick Urban Vestbro). The interest rose again at the end of the 1990s (ibid.) and cohousing has become a popular concept throughout the world although it is still a marginal phenomenon (Krokfors 2012, 311). Still today, the main aim of cohousing is to create social contacts between neighbours and facilitate the everyday life (Lietaert 2010, 578).

#### 4.3.1 Cohousing's Characteristics and Variations

Cohousing combines benefits of individual housing with those of living in a community (Sargisson 2012, 29). It aims to develop reinvigorating neighbourhoods (McCamant 1999) with reciprocal support (Fedrowitz and Gailing 2003, 34) through common areas, facilities and resources (Williams 2008, 269). Cohouses have the common characteristics of a social contact design, community work and participatory process. The physical **social contact design** encourages a strong sense of community (Jarvis 2011, 560). Features are for instance housing density, grouped structures with often roofed corridors, an emphasis on pedestrian circulation and peripheral parking (Torres-Antonini 2001, 13), visibility from private homes to communal spaces, and most importantly common facilities (Williams 2008, 269). Common areas are designed for the daily use to supplement private living areas and are seen as informal gathering places (ibid.). Shared facilities, for which the individual apartments are usually kept smaller, as well as sharing goods and services reduces personal consumption of items. Thus, collective instead of individual ownership contributes greatly to sustainability (Vestbro 2012, 1). Furthermore, cohousing residents spend several hours on working for the community, i.e. **community work**, either individually or together (more from Subsection 6.3 onwards). Finally, all cohouses have a **participatory decision-making process**. Resident are usually part of all strategic and operational steps (Williams 2008, 269). Mostly, cohouses are organised as associations and there is a non-hierarchical structure and decision-making process (Fromm 2010, 137).

Due to historical development, political and economic circumstances today (Egerö 2010, 11), as well as different culture and language, there are different terms and variations of cohousing. Differences not only concern the degree or interpretation of the above mentioned characteristics but also in the following listed elements: **Initiation and ownership** can be bottom-up i.e. private groups or associations build the house by raising their own capital (Fedrowitz and Gailing 2003, 66). Because this form excludes low-income people, it has been criticised (Williams 2008, 282). In contrast, top-down means that the cohousing is built and owned by for instance a municipal or private housing companies (Fedrowitz and Gailing 2003, 66). Cohouses' **location** is either in a rural or urban setting. This influences the sustainability because rural projects, which are usually built horizontally, are more space-intense than their urban counterparts (Meltzer 2005, 1) and are rather car-dependent. Usually, the average **size of a cohousing community** is between 40 to 100 people which allows to not totally give up their autonomy as well as gives the freedom to choose the degree of involvement in communal activities (McCamant and Durrett 1989, 42). While some cohouses are heterogeneous by

representing a high diversity regarding age, gender, nationality or income and have no specific purpose except seeking community, other cohouses show a high degree of homogeneity (see Institute for Creative Sustainability 2012). This can mean that the cohousing is built for instance for the “second half of the life” (senior cohousing), exclusively for women or follow certain value sets (ibid.). However, research shows that cohousing residents tend to have a rather high socio-economic status and are often well-educated (Marckmann et al. 2012, 424; Meltzer 2005, 2).

Especially the amount of shared goods and common facilities, the degree of common activities, as well as the interpretation and implementation of community work varies from cohousing to cohousing. Some focus on rationalising and simplifying daily activities (Millonig et al. 2010, 10) whereas others share many everyday activities (Krokfors 2012, 310). The more that is shared, the less is individually consumed and thus the degree of sustainability varies.

#### 4.3.2 Meanings of *co* in Cohousing

The term cohousing accepts different forms and can be seen as an umbrella term as well as a common translation to English. What is included in each country’s definition might not always overlap with what is understood with cohousing as used in the English speaking world and internationally. The term cohousing leaves open what is connoted with “co” and should thus be used as a wider concept (Vestbro 2010, 25). However, there are some restrictions. Cohousing stands for **community** or **communal housing** since these are used as umbrella terms for all kinds of housing fostering community. Further, it stands for **collaborative housing** as this means that residents work together in a joint effort with a common goal (Oxford English Dictionary 2013) and to be defined as cohousing, this is the prerequisite. Relating to the ownership of the house, **cooperative housing** is opposed to private ownership i.e. it refers to a collectively owned house and shares are rented out to residents (National Association of Housing Cooperatives nd). However, the term does not necessarily indicate whether there are common spaces and shared facilities (Vestbro 2010, 29). Thus, cohousing can take the form of cooperative housing but cannot merely be described as one. Although it is often seen as a synonym to cooperative housing, I follow Vestbro and Horelli (2012, 315) in their distinction that **collective housing** does not refer to ownership but to the “collective organization of services”. Collective housing applies to cohousing because it could mean sharing of different amenities like common laundry but does not refer to collaboration (Vestbro 2010, 22). Lastly, cohousing is clearly distinct from the term **commune** since this would imply no individual apartments (ibid., 29).



## 5 The Cases

### 5.1 Cohousing in Austria

In the German-speaking countries, cohousing is translated to *Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen* [communal housing] under which several forms of housing are subsumed (Millonig et al. 2010, 54). Thus, it becomes unclear which houses can be labelled “cohouse”. This could be a reason why some projects call themselves cohouses instead of *gemeinschaftliches Wohnprojekt* [communal housing project] which is otherwise used. Although it often overlaps who plans and builds a cohouse, there are two separate terms. *Baugruppe* [building group] or *Baugemeinschaft* [building community] is used for the group planning and building cohouses and *Wohngruppe* [housing group] for those actually living there. The idea of cohousing in Austria is not new (e.g. kitchenless apartments in the 1920s), and some outstanding projects have been realised. Nonetheless, the frame conditions for the implementation of such forms of housing have not been improved (Initiative für gemeinschaftliches Bauen und Wohnen nd). Therefore, since 2009, the *Initiative für gemeinschaftliches Bauen und Wohnen* [Initiative for communal building and housing] tries to leverage the development in order to get the necessary support from public authorities. Besides organising promotional and informational events, the initiative collects all related projects in Austria (see *ibid.*). The network Austrotopia (2013) has similar goals and activities, but focuses on projects with an ecological aspect. Altogether, there are around 60 communal housing projects and more than 18 are currently being planned and constructed (interview with Ernst Gruber)<sup>5</sup>.

#### 5.1.1 The Cohouse Lebensraum

Completed in June 2005, Lebensraum is officially called Austria’s first cohouse. Lebensraum is located in the countryside with 4 km to the train station with fast train connections to the 20 minutes remote Vienna (see Figure 7). The house is owned and was built by a cooperative but from 2015 onwards, the apartments can be taken over as property. Each of the 32 clustered and horizontally built homes have their own private terrace and a small garden, as it can be seen in Figure 4. The homes are connected with a roofed corridor which is partly used as an extension of the private apartments. There is a rather high diversity of age with 46 adults (of whom two are over 70 years old and 3 have an international background), 7 teenagers are above 12 years old and 28 children are below 12 years old. Men and women

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<sup>5</sup>These numbers however involve all forms of communal housing under which cohousing is subsumed and is a rough estimation. Thus, there might be more unknown projects.

are almost equally represented. Families with children compose the highest proportion of household compilations (Millonig et al. 2010, 13). The smaller than ordinary apartments are compensated with common spaces and facilities: kitchen, food storage, dining room, couches, kids-corner, multi-purpose room, laundry room, workshop, big entrance hall, little store for organic and local food (organised by residents), outside terrace (Figure 3) and a sandbox for kids. The house also has a big green area with individual gardens, a compost and other free-time facilities. Lebensraum is organised as an association with meetings on average every month and has a democratic structure.



Figure 3: *Lebensraum's courtyard, taken from Lebensraum (2009).*



Figure 4: *Lebensraum's floor plan, taken from Lebensraum (2009). The numbers indicate the private dwellings, the grey areas the common space. The additional big green area is not depicted.*

## 5.2 Cohousing in Sweden

In Sweden, cohousing is best translated to *kollektivhus* [collective house]. Although most of the houses changed their focus away from favouring a rational organisation to community work and fostering community, the name stayed (Vestbro 2010, 23). There are around 45 functioning cohouses today, and 4 are currently under construction (interview with Dick Urban Vestbro). According to Egerö et al. (2010, 4), all have and make use of a communal kitchen but vary in the degree of the common facilities and in size. Also, a grand majority of cohouses are built and owned by municipal housing companies (ibid., 5). The umbrella organisation *Kollektivhus Nu* was founded 1991 as a result of the big boom of cohousing in the 1980s to protect interests in cohousing and stimulate a public and political debate (Kollektivhus NU 2010). It further organises conferences and events, as well as acts as a platform to connect Sweden's *kollektivhus* (ibid.). Sweden can be considered as one of the forerunners in the cohousing development and research and the public and political discussion is more prevalent than in Austria.

### 5.2.1 The Cohouse Fiolen

The cohousing Fiolen in Lund is built and owned by Lund's municipal housing company and was occupied in October 1992. It is located around 3.5 km from the city centre of Lund (see Figure 7) with fairly good bus connections. The house has 25 apartments over two floors. The apartments are connected through a roofed corridor. They are smaller than an average Swedish apartment. Instead, there are large common rooms (marked in Figure 6) such as a big community kitchen, food storage, dining room (Figure 5) and couches, playroom for children, TV-room also used as guest room, laundry room, sauna, multi-purpose room, music room, as well as an outdoor eating place and green spaces with private garden plots for some of the residents. At the moment, there are 35 adults (14 males and 21 females), 16 children under 18 years old, and 2 the age of 18 years who live with their parents. Similar to Lebensraum, the age distribution is thus quite broad, ranging from newborns to the oldest resident who is over 70 years old. Furthermore, the cohousing has a few international residents. Fiolen is organised as an association, membership is obligatory for all residents and one representative of each household should participate in the monthly meetings.



Figure 5: *Fiolen's dining room, taken by the author.*

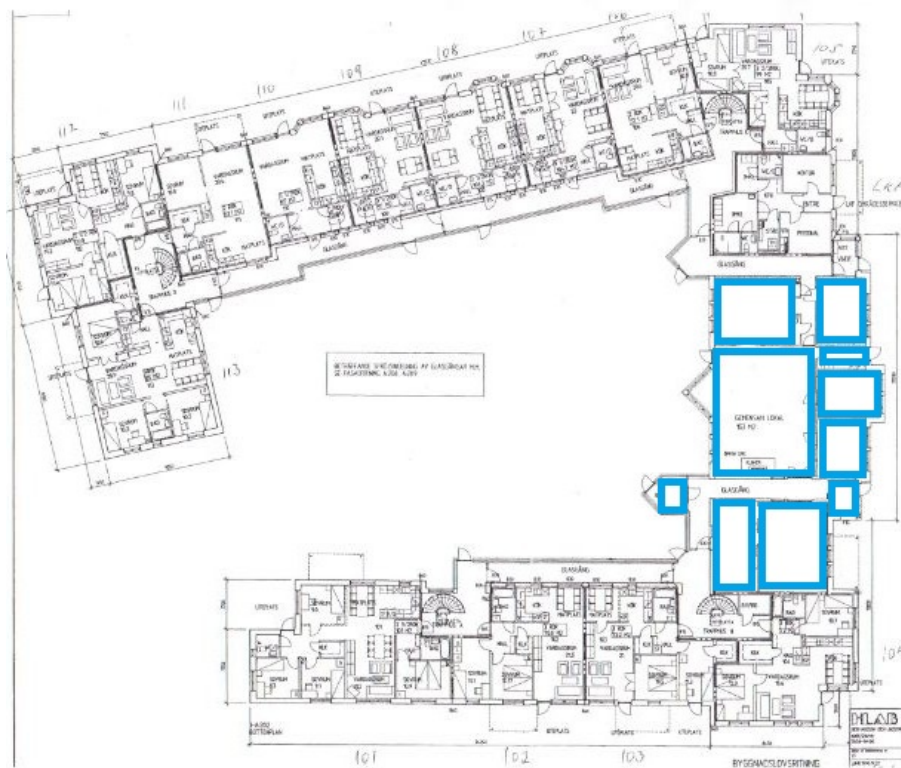


Figure 6: *Fiolen’s floor plan. The thick blue frames indicate the common rooms.*



### 5.3 Differences and Similarities of the Cohouses

Compared to Fiolen, Lebensraum has a big green area which means more work to care but in return provides more leisure time facilities, both strengthening the community. Both co-houses are intentional communities which means that there is a shared vision of community-oriented living (Institute for Creative Sustainability 2012, 17). However, my impression is that the Lebensraum residents are also united through common sustainability ideals and values. To a smaller degree, pro-environmental behaviour can also be observed in Fiolen. Sustainable everyday practices are discussed in both houses on a regular basis and thus people inspire and challenge each other (Marckmann et al. 2012, 422-423). However, since Fiolen residents are less homogeneous, the cohousing might attract more people with different value sets. Furthermore, whereas the educational-level in Lebensraum is above-average and around a third work half-time (Millonig et al. 2010, 98), the socio-economic status and number of hours spent on paid work in Fiolen is seen to mirror the Swedish society in general<sup>6</sup>.

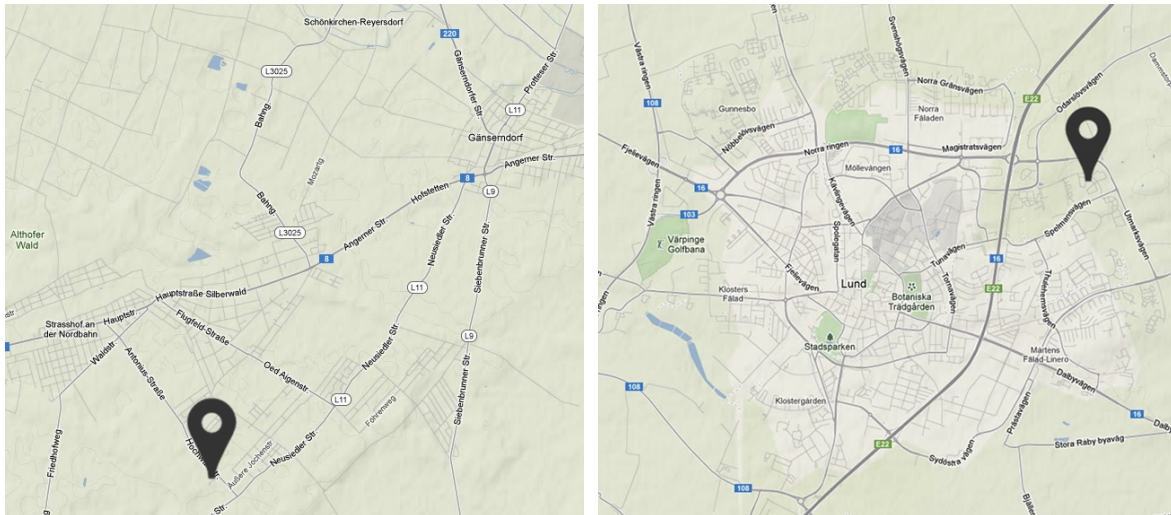


Figure 7: Location of the cohousing projects. Left image Lebensraum in a rural area, right image Fiolen on the outskirts of a city.

<sup>6</sup>This is according to one resident because data was not available.

## 6 Cohousing's Community Work and its Contribution to Redefining Work

### 6.1 The Definition of Work Matters

In both Lebensraum and Fiolen, the first reaction from most interviewees was to define work as something rather negative. Whereas the interviewees in Fiolen could not find a common definition since there were too many different opinions and thus could not agree on categories of work either, the focus group discussants of Lebensraum used more general terms. Florian (L)<sup>7</sup> summed this up: “*Work is the general performance of activities to reach a goal*”. However, for most of the interviewed representatives in Lebensraum, the term is negatively connoted if it is related to effort, to something that has to be done and is dictated by others as well as if there is no enjoyment or sense in it. If these negative aspects are not given, for some, the term work turns into something rather positive. Then Roswitha (L), for example, would call it activity instead. Also in Fiolen, the residents would rather describe work as task, if perceived as positive. However, everyone enjoys different things. Jakob (L) highlighted that thinking deeper and discussing the term work might change the view on it and connote it positively. It also makes one realise how much work is actually done, according to Hanna (F)<sup>8</sup>.

Whereas Lebensraum's residents' definition of work resembles the definition of holistic work and thus is an important step to get closer to a reconceptualisation of work closer, some Fiolen residents had quite a traditional view of excluding unpaid work but also work as unpleasant and physical. Further, Fiolen residents preferred to define house and care work as *plikter* [duties]: “*Something you have to do, you cannot get out of it.*” (Hanna, F) Also, the things done for and in the cohousing, although this does not majorly differ to Lebensraum, should not be called work but communal duties<sup>9</sup>.

For a redefinition of work, defining and understanding the term is relevant. It does not only enable a common and equal level of importance placed on work, but also affects everyone's everyday life and discourse (Altus 1995, 59) through government policies, regulations and businesses which shape work (Craig 2012, 457). However, not only is understanding, defining and measuring work difficult theoretically (ibid., 458) but also practically. The focus

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<sup>7</sup>L = cohousing Lebensraum

<sup>8</sup>F = cohousing Fiolen

<sup>9</sup>Nevertheless, for the matter of comparability, from hereon I label communal duties community work.

group interviews showed that looking at one's own personal life to define work and find segments is difficult especially because our understanding is influenced by societal discourses, culture and language, as well as the surrounding environment. Because the majority of the interviewees connoted work negatively, it could on the other hand, be problematic to downgrade performances which are theoretically chosen voluntarily, like living in a community or upraising children, to work. On the other hand, not referring all human performances to work restricts many (unpaid) performances from being appreciated equally to paid work and implies they are not of importance for the development of society.

The reason for Lebensraum to have a rather uniform understanding of work which is different to Fiolen residents can be traced back to their homogeneous value set oriented towards sustainability. The homogeneity might be due to the fact that the cohousing Lebensraum is rather young compared to Fiolen. According to Moa (F), common values are crucial when starting a cohousing. When years are passing by, people active in building up the house move out and new people with different value sets move in, furthering heterogeneity of the residents. However, it has to be considered what is defined and understood with work and how it is actually implemented can differ (see Subsection 6.4).

This discussion leads to my first finding:

**Finding 1:** The understanding of work and its meaning depends on personal experiences, culture and the social environment. A common understanding of work is, however, influenced by a homogeneous group.

## 6.2 Categorisation of Work in a Cohousing

The major categories of work defined by the interviewees of Lebensraum are paid work, family work, individual work, community work in the cohousing and voluntary work outside the cohousing (see Table 2). The focus group participants agreed that the boundaries of these categories are blurry and all can be either pleasant or unpleasant. Yet, they have to be done by every cohousing resident, but personal preferences of what kind of work is important have to be considered, according to Roswitha (L). Comparing these to the concept of Mixed Work with its four segments (see Section 3) shows that there are similar understandings. Paid work is defined as the same, perhaps because it is what society defines as work. For the interviewees, care work has the same content but they would call it family work since

it happens in the family. For them, this category subsumes housework and care work of children, parents and other relatives. Individual work is also described in similar terms.

However, cohousing residents clearly emphasised a separation between community work in the cohousing and voluntary work outside the cohousing. The main reason is that community work in the cohousing does not take place in the public sphere like voluntary work usually does and mainly only benefits the cohousing residents. Further, it has elements of the individual and care work described in Mixed Work. In the community, as well as in individual work, goods to care of one's own are produced and the organisational principle is subsistency. It also has elements of the organisational principle caring and is about personal and emotional interaction with others. But community work has the goal of minimising and facilitating individual and care work and is not located in the private household either. It takes place at an intermediary level - between the private and the public.

However, both community work inside and outside the cohousing have similar elements. Community work in the cohousing is done voluntarily because by deciding to move into a cohousing, residents also automatically choose community work. Also, both have the organisational principles solidarity and self-help. Solidarity has been considered as intrinsic motivation by knowing that everyone depends and can rely on each other. This can in turn be related to self-help if considered as improving one's personal well-being since solidarity increases the community's well-being and in turn also the personal quality of life (Sebastian, L). Similar to voluntary work, there is only solidarity and thus personal benefits for those joining community work (Maria, L) and more for those who are equally active in the community (Sebastian, L). The question is then if community work in the cohousing is not a separate segment of work but can be put on the same level as voluntary work.

Seeing the work in the cohousing from outside a cohousing, I consider the work in the cohousing as a subcategory of community work described in Mixed Work (see Table 2). The reason for this conclusion is that a big part of the purpose and aim of the work is to benefit a community and its members. From hereon, I label unpaid work in the cohousing community work and unpaid work outside the cohousing voluntary work. The English translation community work for *Gemeinschaftarbeit* used in Mixed Work might not be fully correct anyways because the term community work rather refers to fewer people who are geographically connected whereas *Gemeinschaftarbeit* includes a wider spectrum than voluntary work for the own social network or community group (see Subsection 3.1). Thus, translating *Gemeinschaftarbeit* with voluntary work is more suitable. Also, using the term community work for the work



in the cohousing fits better because it refers to “unpaid work by and for the extended family, social or neighbourhood network” (Williams and Nadin 2012, 2).

However, it has to be taken into consideration that some residents only do community work for individual benefits, according to Maria (L). It is also problematic that cohousing is criticised as pocket utopias i.e. whereby residents enjoy a good life, the outside is not challenged (Robinson 1988 in Sargisson 2012, 51), although the cohousing often tries and does improve the wider neighbourhood (Fromm 2012, 365; Williams 2008, 271). Furthermore, according to the interviewees, there is no or less time left for voluntary work outside the cohousing, although it is assumed that cohousing residents are in general more active voluntarily (Berghäuser nd, 7). This might, however, not mirror a general decrease of voluntary work (Wolf 2004, 15) but is, according to the interviewees, due to the extra time needed for community work in the cohousing. Another reason might be the fact that there is less individual need to be active in voluntary work outside the cohousing since community work fulfills the functions of social networks and solidarity.

The preceding discussion leads me to my next finding:

**Finding 2:** Cohousing opens up a new form of community work, taking place at an intermediary level, that has not been considered in the concept of Mixed Work.

Given that the cohousing residents use different terms for the segments of work, I hereon use those described by the focus group participants:

Table 2: **From the segments of Mixed Work to those suggested by Lebensraum residents.**

<b>Segments of Work as Defined in Mixed Work</b>		<b>Segments of Work as Defined by Lebensraum Residents</b>
Paid Work	=	Paid Work
Individual Work	=	Individual Work
Care Work	→	Family Work
		- Housework
		- Care Work
Community Work	→	Voluntary Work
		- Community Work

### 6.3 Organisation of Community Work and its Required Time

Based on my observations and the focus group interviews, I divide community work in both cohouses into subcategories. In Lebensraum, I identified three types:

- **Collaborative work** describes work that is done jointly by the residents for the community. This includes taking part in the monthly house meetings and the so-called *Aktionstage* [action days] which are days where certain tasks like the main cleaning of the kitchen or the cleaning of the windows are done together. For the action days, the residents have to fill in name, date, description and hours of work on a list.
- **Collective work** describes work that is done by individuals for the community. All residents have to sign up for a specific task. These tasks range from clearing the snow or mowing the grass, to organising action days or being the chairman of the association. A list with the works and the names hangs in the entrance hall visible for everyone and the residents have to write down the conducted hours. This facilitates that everybody is assigned to take over one task and if a resident thinks that a certain task is not fulfilled then s/he can ask the person responsible to do it. If somebody does not want to or has no time to fulfill his or her work, some other resident could take it over (in exchange for other work or money). At the end of the year the list is balanced. These individual works can become collaborative work if residents team up in groups to do it.
- **Informally organised community work** includes voluntary implementation of projects like building up infrastructure (e.g. a workshop or expansion of the basement) but also mutually taking care of the children, thus it can be individually or as a group. For example, some parents alternate picking up their children from the bus station and take turns in looking after the children.

Both collaborative and collective work, with the exception of cooking, are compulsory. However, residents can pay others for their work and committing to do the work is not the prerequisite to move in, which is the case in Fiolen. Cooking is either a collective or collaborative work as it can be done in pairs or alone<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup>Around half of the Lebensraum residents join the common cooking and dining which takes place four days a week. Residents can either sign up for two or four meals a week. If signed up twice, residents have to either cook twice on their own or four times in pairs (if eating four times then doubled) in an approximate four months cycle.

Also differing in the two cohousing, the majority of the community work in Fiolen is supposed to be done either in group or pairs, thus named as **collaborative work** which is also compulsory. First, this comprises of cleaning the corridors and taking care of the green spaces for which the residents get a reduction in the rent. For cleaning the corridors, the residents pair up and take turns. On average, a resident has to clean once a month. For the green spaces (e.g. mowing lawn or raking leaves), every resident must team up into groups of four, four times per term. Second, this comprises of cooking and washing the dishes<sup>11</sup> which is also compulsory for every resident. Collaborative work is also being part of one working group (e.g. homepage, new move ins or board of the association) and taking part in the monthly house meetings. In addition to Fiolen's collaborative work, there is also **informally organised community work** which is similar to Lebensraum.



Figure 8: *Fiolen's cooking plan on the public list, taken by the author.*

Of course, time is not only needed for the organisation of the community work but also the establishment of structures and general rules of communal living. According to a study about Lebensraum by Millonig et al. (2010, 34), around 3 hours per month are sufficient to carry out the community work (excluding informally organised work). The answer I got during my investigation ranged between 1 to 5 hours per week in Lebensraum and 1 to 3 in Fiolen.

<sup>11</sup>In Fiolen, common dining takes place every other day during a school term. Three people have to sign up for cooking, two for washing the dishes afterwards. On average, every resident has to cook approximately six times and wash the dishes around four times per term (the plan see Figure 8).

The hours for community work is hard to estimate because of yearly variations and depend on several factors. Amongst others, it depends on the engagement of the individuals in the community work. It is also dependent on the location of the cohousing and the amount of common facilities. More work is required for the rural-located cohousing Lebensraum with its vast green areas.

## 6.4 Distribution of Work between Women and Men

Despite the still rather traditional view on gender-power relations - for Herbert (L) "*rests of old habits and culture*" - all interviewed residents agreed that there is a fairer distribution of work between women and men, especially men take more part in care work than in conventional housing (Maria, L). This is not due to explicit rules or quotas. In Fiolen, the reasons can be found in the structure of the cohousing: "*The duties in the house are scheduled in that way . . . that's how the system wants it to be and that is how it works most of the time.*" (Anders, F) Furthermore, it is enhanced by the fact that they strive to have "*an even amount of men and women in the house*" (Hanna, F), although there were always slightly more women in Fiolen. In Lebensraum a more fair distribution and the bigger part of men in care work than in conventional households, is, according to Florian and Herbert (both L), a result of a generally more progressive way of thinking. This might lead to the conclusion that the attitude and behaviour towards gender-power relations of at least the Lebensraum residents is not a result of cohousing.

However, there might be a discrepancy between the beliefs and views about gender-equality and what is actually happening. For instance, ideologically, residents argue that nobody in the community would judge somebody, forbid somebody from doing something or exclude somebody from something because of sex (Jakob, L) and there should not be differences between men and women (Gustav, F). In practice it might look different. Herbert (L) explained that his partner is sometimes upset by the relatively traditional gender roles in the cohousing. There could be, as Lena (F) pointed out, a hidden difference to which is not reacted on. Also Florian (L) claimed that there is a difference between passively accepting how it is or actively changing gender issues. This cannot be detected without a forum to discuss and without empowering women to see the difference. According to Sebastian (L), cohousing gives the time and space to discuss and most of the interviewed residents argued that this discussion needs to be kept alive.

Furthermore, Herbert (L) had the impression that in some cases women do more for the

community then men i.e. women compensate for their partner's community work. Maria (L) argued that it is, to a large extent, hidden how the work is divided within the private household, thus one cannot jump to conclusions. Nonetheless, in both cohousing women have the tendency to do stereotypical types of community works. In Fiolen for instance, cutting the grass is a man's task (with one exception) or organising of cleaning or gardening is currently only a woman's task. It further seems that men sign up for things where they see immediate success and appreciation. Gustav (F) for example narrated: "... *the thing about doing the grass, I can do it whenever I want to do it, it doesn't take me very long. Immediate job satisfaction.*" Similarly, in Lebensraum women habitually do the work that is less physically intense and they usually take over the work according to their gender roles even though there are exceptions.

Thus, another finding is:

**Finding 3:** There is a more fair distribution of work in cohousing which is due to a certain structure but also a generally more progressive way of thinking. However, there are still remains of traditional views on gender-power relations and gender-roles.

## 6.5 Appreciation of Community Work

The focus group interviews showed that the performance-related dimension of recognition of community work is relatively high in cohousing. First, there is financial appreciation, even if it is only indirectly through a reduction in the rent (Sanna, F) because residents have to clean the common spaces themselves. Lena (F) said that another form of appreciation are the points, i.e. the hours spent on community, which are written down on the public list. Furthermore, according to the interviewees, recognition is above all shown by acknowledging the work by saying thank you to each other, especially when walking by and seeing someone doing something (Herbert, L). Hermann (L) narrated that he especially recognises work by saying thank you for the work he cannot do himself. Further, the residents in Lebensraum established a ritual at the general assembly at the end of each year. They formally thank and show appreciation for what the different working groups have done during the year. Fiolen residents officially thank each other at the house meetings. Additionally, interpersonal recognition is very important in cohousing. Several interviewees mentioned the close social relationships they have established within the community: "... *it is like an extended family*" (Sanna, F) and there is a "*considerate treatment of each other*" (Jakob, L).

Despite the importance of appreciation, Herbert (L) stated that often it is rather recognised what is not working well. Also Jakob (L) explained that he is even happier if nobody has anything against his plans. Sanna (F) further remarked: *“There are probably a lot of people who do not get enough credit for what they do”* and Gustav (F) complained: *“You don’t get much credit when cleaning the corridor.”* However, Moa (F) narrated: *“Everybody helps each other and I think that is rewarding in itself”*. This is probably because, as she adds, *“everyone depends on each other”*, therefore feeling responsibility and appreciation of what is being done. Relying on somebody else’s solidarity helps to enjoy doing things better and appreciation contributes to both individual and communal well-being, as Sebastian (L) pointed out. Also Hermann (L) stated that appreciation of community work acts as an incentive and leads to better enjoyment of work.

This analysis leads to the following finding:

**Finding 4:** There is a relatively high appreciation of community work in the cohousing. This is important for the cohousing system to function, for well-being as well as enjoyment of community work.

## 6.6 Visibility of Community Work

In cohousing, the community work and thus parts of the house and care work which is transferred to community work, is made visible to a larger group - the cohousing community. The work is visible at this semi-public level not only through doing it in the common facilities but also through the public list with the information of which work is done by whom. For the cohousing Fiolen, the list was a bigger issue in the discussion and is more important in the daily life as well, whereas in Lebensraum, the list is rather a small paper somewhere hanging in the corner. The only plausible explanation for this is the fact that in Fiolen, parts of the community work are compulsory for everyone on a monthly basis whereas for Lebensraum the hours are balanced only at the end of a year.

Visibility has negative aspects like implicitly forcing the residents to do their work because the list shows who has done what and when. Moa (F) explained that this can become a stress factor. According to Hanna (F) it can also socially exclude residents with whom nobody signs up to work with. In contrast, visibility can act as an incentive for community work, as Sanna (F) narrated: *“It’s the best satisfaction when ... I put my name on [the public list] and*

*I actually did it, I feel very content with myself.”* Visibility can also lead to better appreciation of work, as Kerstin Kärnekull (expert interview) pointed out: *“If you put all the laundry in one big pile on the floor, then everybody can see it. But if you do the laundry in each family, in each bathroom, nobody sees that this is work”*.

Sanna and Gustav (both F) emphasised that visibility might enhance social learning for children because they are exposed to community work: *“... maybe they [the children] don’t cook but they see what we do... they see people cooperate all the time”*. Furthermore, things happening at the intermediary level are imitated in the private household. For example, attitudes reflected in community work are transferred to the private space, as Anders (F) narrated: *“If you have your duties you have to go out and clean the corridors or whatever, you have to do certain things. And then you get the logic picture, that doesn’t only go for the corridors or the kitchen, that goes for in your home as well. And those things are not done by themselves. I think that could generate that kind of knowledge, even if it is very basic.”* Additionally, higher participation in care work than in traditional households, might amongst others be a result of the visibility in the community. Visibility could also make other - sometimes negative - patterns visible.

This takes me to another finding:

**Finding 5:** Work at the intermediary level makes it visible, contributing to appreciation, social learning, as well as imitating good and highlighting negative patterns.

## **6.7 Benefits and Challenges of Community Work**

### **6.7.1 Facilitation of Family Work**

According to the interviewees, one of the biggest benefits of community work is the facilitation of child care. This is supported by the informally organised child care between the residents as well as by the physical space i.e. the premises (e.g. a playroom) available, narrated Florian (L). This at the same time means that the intermediary level supports by reducing the physical split (NEL 1991, 11-12) through minimising the need to bring children to playdates and other entertainments. Lena (F) also pointed out that residents spend time with other adults without leaving the house because the children play with each other. Given this, parents are less likely to experience exhaustion and stress is alleviated. Sanna (F) explained: *“...that gave me a lot of freedom which I didn’t have before”*. This also means that child

care becomes more attractive. For example, Sanna's decision to have a second baby was made because of the special cohousing setting which facilitates child care. Furthermore, for single mothers exceptions for the communal duties in Fiolen are made so they do not have a double burden of child care and community work. For example, Moa (F) is freed of cleaning up after dinner because she has to put her child to bed, but does something else during the day instead.

Mutual support is also given for housework since *"we are used to working together. You have the feeling that everything is yours together"* (Sanna, F). For example, Sanna told that when organising a private event in the common rooms *"there is always four or five to ten people just walking by, pitching in and helping"* which saves time. Another aspect in saving time for housework is, according to Sebastian (L), that many residents are close friends and when inviting them over there is not the pressure to clean the apartment because they feel like an extended family. Sebastian also claimed that shared purchasing can mean that better and more efficient (and also more environmentally-friendly) machines and other goods can be bought which means time is saved for housework. Furthermore, Herbert (L) mentioned that sharing instead of owning saves time in general. The more goods that are shared, the less goods are owned privately and need to be taken care of individually. Nonetheless, residents have to take care of common and private spaces at the same time because, as Jakob (L) explained, *"whether I live in a cohousing project or in a flat, there are always the same dirty dishes."* Also Lena (F) told about the double work for her own balcony and the common green spaces to be taken care of. Interestingly, her private balcony is often left aside because for her it is more important to work in the common green spaces. A positive aspect for Lena is, however, that the community work gives inspiration to the work in her private space.

For most of the interviewees, time is saved if regularly taking part at communal dining. Lena (F) added that she enjoys cooking for the family every other day more. However, the interviewees argued that cooking could become a disadvantage when interfering with paid work, since cooking has to be started early in the afternoon. It can also become stressful when signed up to cook with residents that one is not so close to, as well as on weekends because usually more residents join the common dinner and the expectations are higher, told Lena. Cooking can further be a burden for single parents since they are less efficient as they have to take their children with them or find someone to babysit. However, single mothers usually arrange the cooking quite well with other single mothers who babysit for each other. Sanna (F) also added: *"...when you write yourself up, and you cook with people who are sympathetic with the situation so you know you could leave if you had to"*.



Whereas it was uniformly agreed that cohousing facilitates family work to a certain degree, it was contested whether, in general, time can be saved through sharing work. Jakob (L) argued that it might look like time-efficiency since the time needed for community work is often neglected (see Subsection 6.3). However, Sebastian (L) claimed that a well-organised community indeed saves some time. Whereas Dick Urban Vestbro (expert interview) assumed that facilitating family work for women by distributing it more fairly could mean that women spend more time on their professional career instead, this was not confirmed in my research. Both Lebensraum and Fiolen residents stated that the freed up time, if there is any, is primarily used for relaxation and socialising.

For the facilitation of family work, a certain size community is needed. Berg et al. (1982, 32) recommend a unit of 20 to 50 apartments. Lebensraum has 32 units and Fiolen 25. The size is important because, as Sanna (F) narrated, there is a good balance between people who are doing less than demanded and those doing more which allows the system to work. However, the community itself and the community work can only work if the residents are *“prepared to do all the duties and want to live like this”* (Stina, F). A bigger size also gives the possibility to better choose what kind of community work they would like to do because work preferences often differ within a larger group. Maria (L) pointed out that *“things which I do not like, I do not have to do them all on my own. Because activities which I prefer, I like to bring in, instead I can leave other things out.”* Choosing the work might also result in increased enjoyment of work. Enjoyment in return might lead to more attractiveness and more appreciation of work. This is also the reason why the interviewees did not want to call it work anymore (instead, Maria (L) for example referred to it as *gemeinschaftliches Miteinander* [communal being together]). This is on the one hand positive because it shows that it truly becomes something positive but on the other hand remotes it from being called work and thus makes it difficult to directly compare it to other forms of work. However, a community of a certain size also enables residents to contribute as long as they can. It also relieves residents from community work and supports in family work those residents who are in more difficult circumstances like pregnancy, single parenthood, or illness. This is additionally supported by solidarity, a high diversity in age as well as a clear structure. In general, a clear structure is needed to facilitate family work and make community work function.

The interviewed residents, however, complained about several disadvantages that follow a clear structure. Above all, the structure has to be built up and constantly organised. Maria (L) explained: *“... this organising, planning, deciding what we do this year, or which project we*

*implement takes occasionally a lot of time until there is a univocal decision in the group. . . that is not only time, that is also tedious*". Second, several interviewees complained about the inflexibility once signed up for the community work which might be overlapping with other private obligations. The work could be swapped but finding someone for this can be difficult. Further, the compulsory community work in Fiolen might result in less freedom to choose of what kind of work they want to do. For example, whereas cleaning the corridors might be beneficial for some, Gustav (F) argued: *"I would actually happily pay a bit more of my rent to not clean the corridor"*. However, the clear structure allows a fair distribution of community work between all residents and thus it has to be weighed out between personal preferences and fair distribution. In Lebensraum, personal preferences are more relevant. In Fiolen, a fair distribution among all residents is more important, for example, all types of community work have to be fulfilled independent of gender.

**Finding 6:** Despite several challenges, cohousing supported by a certain group size, a good organised structure and physical space has the benefit that it facilitates family work. Hence, time could be saved and residents experience less exhaustion. Family work can be enjoyed more because it is less burden and thus becomes more appreciated.

### 6.7.2 Financial Savings

Sharing goods, facilities and services, facilitated by the geographical nearness and thus being easier in cohousing, does not only save time and minimises consumption, but has financial benefits at the same time. Actually, financial savings due to cohousing is a big benefit for the residents, although the interviewees agreed that it should not be the main reason moving into a cohousing. In Lebensraum, according to the interviewees, some work is primarily organised together merely for financial reasons (e.g. clearing snow). Fiolen residents get a reduction on their rent because some of the community work is obligatory. Both in Fiolen and Lebensraum, the interviewees brought up shared cooking as a good way of saving money if they regularly participate in dinners. Maria (L) and Florian (L) pointed out that due to common rooms acting as gathering places for adults as well as children, the need to go out to meet friends is minimised and thus has a financial benefit. Lebensraum residents also claimed to save money through the vast green space because they can use them for recreational activities and entertainment. Another example of saving money for Herbert (L) is that some residents in Lebensraum use car pooling for their second car and save money through clothes swaps, and shared books and magazines which functions through the common organisation.

Florian (L) brought forward that the financial benefits of community work enable residents to work less for income generation and thus more time is freed up for other types of work. The reason that many Lebensraum residents work half time is not only due to their higher socio-economic status but is indeed reinforced by less money being needed through sharing goods, facilities and services as well as taking care of works that are otherwise professionally organised. All these are in turn made possible by communal effort i.e. community work. Further, not outsourcing the work and thus not replacing it by the market by doing it themselves means that subsistency is strengthened and thus contributing to autonomy. However, Florian (L) also points out that the residents have, in general, a different understanding and approach to paid work. This is, however, contrary in Fiolen where the amount of time spent on paid work reflects an average Swedish citizen.

**Finding 7:** Through community work, money is saved and thus gives the opportunity to spend less time on paid work.

### 6.7.3 Strengthening the Group

Stated by several interviewees in both houses, working in the community leads to social benefits and is a big contributor to the existence and strengthening of the group since, as Roswitha (L) put it: *“There is a difference if we sit together and tell stories or if we go out in the garden with the same group and do something”*. This is confirmed by Meltzer (2005) who states that “cooperation . . . builds social relationships and is also dependent upon them.” Furthermore, because community work is to a certain degree done in pairs or groups, the work is enjoyed. As Sebastian (L) pointed out: *“Action days are fulfilled with laugh, fun and dining together which makes them nice experiences”*. Sanna (F) told that working together and thus knowing better your neighbours, as well as cleaning themselves instead of an external service, leads to a higher degree of trust and thus a feeling of security. Trust, in general, is said to be higher in cohousing communities than in traditional neighbourhoods (Poley 2007, 119), further enhancing child care and is an important prerequisite to share goods and facilities.

The problem herewith is that first, in Lebensraum not all work is obligatorily to be done together. Second, in Fiolen, you can end up always signing up with the same people (Lena, F). Third, although cleaning in Fiolen is supposed to be done in pairs, residents do it individually and thus it is not pleasant anymore (Gustav, F). Furthermore, although working together

teaches the residents to become more thoughtful about other things and people since you *“take over responsibility not only for your private life but also for the ‘bigger’ room”* (Herbert, L), knowing your neighbours and taking responsibility for the whole house can turn into a drawback. Hermann (L) gave the example of recycling where he is sometimes confronted with thoughtlessness of residents (e.g. trash not properly recycled) and he has to *“iron out the things of others which you actually do not want to do but which has to be done”*. Also, Sebastian (L) complained that sometimes he feels that there is a relatively small degree of obligation, when you arrange something you cannot be sure if people that will turn up. However, it has to be considered that a cohousing is neither a small private family nor a company, noted Maria and Herbert (both L).

**Finding 8:** Working together strengthens the group and leads to enjoyment of work, although for some being responsible for more than the private family can become disadvantageous.

## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Summarising Statements and Potentials of Mixed Work in Cohousing for Sustainability

Already 200 years ago there were beliefs that a certain physical and architectural design as well as a community with geographical nearness can contribute to facilitating and relieving women from being the main person in charge of family work by sharing or outsourcing these work tasks (see Hayden 1982). Sharing unpaid work among a geographically near community at a so-called intermediary level - bigger than the private household but smaller than the municipality - has been promoted successfully in Scandinavia since the 1960s. The idea spread and the term cohousing was coined as the supportive structure for the everyday life, and has today become a successful, although still marginal, concept throughout the world (Krokfors 2012, 311). Given the intentions of cohousing, it might contribute to a redefined view on work that is demanded, because the prevailing notion of work excludes unpaid activities and leads to unsustainability. Thus, this study analyses on basis of the analytical concept of Mixed Work how cohousing contributes to a redefinition through participant observations and a qualitative analysis of focus group interviews with the cohouses Lebensraum in Austria and Fiolen in Sweden, supported by interviews with cohousing experts.

The study indicates that the key to cohousing's contribution to an extended view on work is **community work** which takes place **at an intermediary level** and in such a form has not be included in Mixed Work. Community work in the investigated cohouses is organised either as collaborative work, i.e. jointly by the residents for the community like the main cleaning of the communal kitchen, or as collective work, i.e. individually done, but for the community. Further, there is informally organised community work which includes voluntary implementation of projects and mutually taking care of the children. It can be organised individually or as a group.

To begin with, important for a redefinition of work is awareness and an understanding of work and all its segments, including unpaid work activities. The Lebensraum residents classified **family work**, which includes care and housework, **individual work** as well as **voluntary work outside the cohousing** and **community work inside the cohousing** (see Table 2). Although for some Lebensraum residents work is still a negative term, they have a **rather holistic view** on work. In contrast, the definitions of the residents in the cohousing Fiolen are in general **more traditional**. Most of them excluded other activities than paid work from

being called work. The different understanding are due to personal experiences, culture and the social environment. Also, the more homogeneous Lebensraum group - most of the residents have a traditional family household compilation, have similar educational status and for most of them sustainability in the daily life is important - might influence this understanding. However, Lebensraum residents might have had a different view on work before the move-in, relating to their sustainability values, which might have been one of the reasons to move to the cohousing. Their view on work did not change through cohousing, but living in cohousing is rather enabling them to live out their ideals. Yet, there might be a discrepancy between a theoretical understanding of work and its practical implementation which could not have been investigated. Nonetheless, all cohousing residents are implicitly obliged to discuss and reflect how community work is organised to make it function and as a consequence become more aware of unpaid work. Also, I sparked a discussion with the focus group interviews about what work is and how it is distributed between women and men. Through the intense discussions and the agreement of the residents to keep the discussion alive, I probably extended their understanding and thus potentially gave an impetus to reconsider them.

However, a different understanding and awareness is only the first step. The next one is establishing an interpersonal link of all forms of work, a plurality of work. This means that people are able to and actually pursue paid work and simultaneously family, individual and voluntary work according to their personal preferences and alteration of these combinations in biographical perspective (Hildebrandt 2003, 390). To allow that, amongst others, the focus has to be shifted away from paid work by reducing paid working hours (Brandl 2008, 119). Financial savings through living in the cohousing provides the possibility to reduce paid work. Not only my interviewees emphasised that they have **financial benefits** of living in cohousing, also Williams (2005, 162) mentions that cohousing residents save money through pooling of resources and sharing facilities and goods. In turn, this becomes possible through community work. The introduction of community work does not only lead to financial benefits, but also **facilitates family work**, despite its additional effort, time and some challenges. Family work is made easier by the physical premises available, a well-functioning community with a high degree of trust, a certain group size as well as a good organised structure. These factors also enable residents to better pursue individual combinations and supports residents in difficult circumstances.

By a facilitation of family work, time could be saved and residents experience less exhaustion. Family work can be more enjoyed because it is less burden and becomes more appreciated. Generally, appreciation is also one of the keys to allow interpersonal links of all forms of

work because to achieve a plurality of work, all forms of work have to be equally appreciated (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 5). My research indicates a **high importance of appreciation of community work** in the cohousing. Community work is mainly recognised performance-related i.e. residents acknowledge the work by saying thank you to each other spontaneously and at official meetings. The interviewed Fiolen residents especially emphasised the financial appreciation of community work (the reduction in rent). Besides increased appreciation through facilitation of family work, cohousing contributes to an appreciation of all activities through visibility of community work at the semi-public level. Furthermore, through working together, the residents enjoy the work leading to more appreciation. An increased appreciation of all unpaid work activities does not only contribute to a redefinition of work, it would additionally lead to less status competition but instead a more cooperative society (Jackson 2009, 91) and consequently shape sustainability.

In general, a plurality of work means that **social security** is increased through less dependence on the market and the state and through integration in social communities (Hildebrandt 2003, 392). In cohousing, the independence is stronger because of the well-functioning community but also because of the group size. More people can support each other and have "broader competence and larger resources" (NEL 1991, 10). In the examined cohousing, many unpaid work tasks are not outsourced and replaced by the market but rather, they are done by the residents which also contributes to autonomy. A plurality of work would also lead to less consumption of goods (Brandl and Hildebrandt 2001, 1). Cohousing's contribution to a plurality of work and particularly the sharing of resources, goods and services leads to **less and collaborative consumption**. Hence, cohousing's community work becomes inseparable from ecological sustainability.

Seemingly, community work is **fairly distributed between women and men** and according to the interviewees men play a bigger role in family work than in traditional households. Thus, cohousing can contribute to an interpersonal link of work i.e. redistribution of work between women and men in both directions (Hildebrandt 2003, 391-392) and hence contribute to social equality. In the studied cohousing, a fairer distribution is reached through structure because everyone regardless of gender (exceptions for those in certain circumstances) has to work equally. Also, visibility plays a crucial role as it enhances imitating, social learning as well as highlighting what does not work and thus provide a basis for discussion and improvement. However, a more gender-neutral view on work could be resulting from different value sets formed before moving into cohousing and is not necessarily due to the cohousing setting.

The study further shows that working together does not only facilitate the everyday life of the cohousers, but has the benefit that it also **strengthens the community**. Therewith, cohousing increases the social network and well-being of the residents which in turn reflects social sustainability. Hence, community work can be seen as the crucial basis for the coherence of cohousing which is furthered by the additional physical space acting as an informal gathering place for the residents. However, not only do the common facilities need additional effort and time to take care of but also to make the community work successfully happen, a certain structure and organisation is necessary. This demands time and can be tedious. Further, it can become negative and not functioning if residents show a small degree of obligation and if some have to take over too much responsibility for others. However, the benefits are outweighing because community work contributes to “the things that really matter: family, identity, friendship, community, and purpose in life” (Jackson 2009, 86).

## 7.2 Suggesting Future Research

In general, research on cohousing or other forms of communal housing and its effects on an organisation of work have to be investigated more because practical forms to exemplify an extended view on work are needed. More in-depth research could be conducted on the economic benefits of community work because a redefinition of work involves a reduction in paid work. This could be especially interesting for people with lower income for which a plurality of work is out of the question because of the financial necessity to work full-time. Also, a closer look at the aspect of saving time and the use of saved time as well as comparing that to traditional households could give a better understanding and closer link to a redefinition. Furthermore, the intersectorial link of the forms of work - linking production with reproduction - could be explored in cohousing. Cohousing has the potential to create a proximity between dwelling and paid work by offering additional physical space. Particularly, appreciation of community work in cohousing needs to be further looked at in closer relation to theories of recognition. Appreciation of community work is not only important to contribute to a holistic view on work but can also be seen as driving force for group formations (Honneth 2010, 202-216). Because of individual preferences and circumstances of housing as well as lack of cohouses in general, it could be investigated which parts of and how community work can be transferred to outside the cohousing.

Although this research shows that cohousing contributes to a redefinition of work, it also indicates that cohousing residents do not have a fully extended view on work and still face



challenges within the cohousing. One could better follow the principles of transdisciplinary research by applying elements of action research to explore potential solutions (Stringer 2007, 10) in exchange with study participants.

### **7.3 Concluding Remarks**

Although reaching a redefined view is interlinked to the demand for a new economic system and needs support and initiation from the state (see Biesecker 2000), this thesis has shown that the household level can play an important role in reconceptualising work when organised as a cohousing. Cohousing might only marginally contribute to reaching a cultural and social appreciation of all activities needed for a holistic understanding of work, it might not be the only solution and it might be criticised as pocket utopia. Nevertheless, cohousing contributes to a sustainable society and fulfills some prerequisites needed for an extended view on work. Cohousing is a “strategy from below” (NEL 1991, 31) to achieve change and can be seen as a practical approach to contributing to a redefinition of work starting from within the current system. Although this is a small and marginal step, in the long-term, small steps can lead to structural changes (ibid.).

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# Appendix

## Guiding Themes and Questions for the Focus Group Interviews

### 1. Basic understanding of work:

- Presentation of each participant with name and one sentence of what they understand with the term “work” (a feeling and/or a personal definition).
- Defining segments of work together in the group (I used their defined segments for the further discussion).

### 2. Community work in the cohousing:

- What are the benefits?
- What are the challenges?

### 3. Distribution of community work between women and men:

- Do you feel that community work is equally distributed?
- If yes, what are reasons?
- Is there a tendency of what sorts of work women and men do?
- Do you discuss and reflect it as a group?

### 4. Appreciation of unpaid work:

- How is community work appreciated?
- Has your attitude and appreciation of individual and family work changed since you moved in?