

## The Future of Urban Living: Innovations in Co-Living Spaces

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the new trend of the urban lifestyle based on the analysis of how co-living as an architectural and socio-economic phenomenon has evolved and remained relevant in modern times. To start with a historical background of its roots, the paper discusses the history of co-living, starting with traditional communities and structure of communal living, the initial concept of the cooperatives in chawls of India, and the changing trends of co-living, including boarding houses, in the context of the wide dynamics of urbanization, affordability, and new patterns of living. In order to further investigate this question, two case studies of international architecture are discussed: Havemeyer House in New York (Brooklyn), the work of Common, and R50 Cohousing, Berlin, Germany. Such precedents depict diverse spatial scheme such as micro-unit settings, shared amenity schemes and mixed-use fusions, which all lead to the redefinition of traditional residential design, and the development of shared and common urban ways of life. In addition to the creation of forms in architecture, the study examines the social and economic forces behind the propagation of co-living throughout the world. This analysis indicates that co-living is more likely to increase social connectivity, decrease the sense of isolation, and adapt to the needs of more mobile populations. Co-living models offer more accessible living conditions in high-density cities economically, as they maximize shared resources and cut down on housing spending on an individual basis. Together, the results place co-living as a versatile and effective housing concept that has a high potential to alter the residential development in the future, especially in highly urbanizing settings.*



## **Introduction**

Co-living can be defined as a home set up where three or more people who do not share any biological relations live together (Bothell, 2015). It is a new form of housing that is being adapted in the urban centers of the world especially by young professionals who want cheap yet flexible and social living solutions. Co-living integrates the space sharing with establishment of communities based on shared interests, values and lifestyles. As a Pakistani student, it can be felt that the global urban trends and co-living has become an alternative to increasing housing prices, fast urbanization, and new social conditions, and it can also teach some lessons that can be applied to the Pakistani urban environment. COVID19 pandemic has also contributed to the same needs recently in the holistic picture of Pakistan urbanscape (Bhatti & Ghufraan, 2020).

## **Aim of the Paper**

This research sought to explore the new paradigm of urban living through the lens of co-living as a socio-economic phenomenon and as an architectural phenomenon. In this study, co-living is placed in the historical context as it advanced in its progression as a type of traditional communal living, and early co-operative living designs like the chawls of India and boarding houses to the present day co-living designs. The study examines various spatial strategies, such as the micro-unit structures, shared amenity structures and integrations of mixed-use, all of which have been used to question traditional residential design by reviewing two international case studies, namely, Havemeyer House in Brooklyn, New York, and R50 Cohousing in Berlin, Germany. In addition to the architectural aspects, the paper looks into the social and economic elements that spur the adoption of co-living world over, such as increased social networking, less isolation, and more affordable housing among the mobile citizens. Finally, the study was meant to establish co-living as an adaptable, socially aware, and economically feasible housing model that has great potential to guide future residential urban development especially in the fast-urbanizing urban centers.

## **Methodology of the Paper**

The paper is based on a thorough literature review involving the increasing housing shortage and the rising popularity of co-living as a modern housing policy in cities. This is because of the scarcity of academic studies on co-living, which continues to support the importance of this study. The research design is mainly the case study of the existing co-living projects, and it will be supported by the academic journals, books, and professional reports on the topic. This paper is also based on the information of One Shared House 2030 (SPACE10 and Anton and Irene, 2018), where the empirical evidence about the best practices and innovative design solutions to co-living facilities can be found. By combining literature review, case study analysis, and empirical evidence, this research aimed to generate a comprehensive understanding of the architectural, social, and economic factors influencing the success of co-living environments. One Shared House 2030 is an online survey platform regarding Co-living and Co-working and following are some result obtained from them:

- Only 4 percent of the population would be dissatisfied to contribute anything and the potential co-livers would accept living in the city.
- The most significant attributes of a good house member is that s/he must be clean and tidy, truthful and thoughtful towards the survey, 4-10 is the best number of people to compose a community and hopefully house members should be chosen by popular ballot.
- They would like the members to enjoy an equal share in the house and most would gladly offer an extra service layer in housekeeping management.

This research was intended to overlay the qualitative data collected with the quantitative one through three approaches (case study, literature, and One Shared House data) to give a full picture of the study in order to identify connections, patterns and preferences of the users and to assist in developing best practices in designing co-living facilities.

### **Co-Living**

The concept of co-living is usually integrated into one house, which is further divided into a mix of shared and personal spaces (Mairs, 2016). Housing architecture has evolved through time, typologically and conceptually. Due to this transformation and change, another concept has come to light the concept of co-living. Co-living is a different form of modern living where the place residents get to share a common place of residence that they have common interests and plans and values almost just like a big family. Co-living is constructed on the principle of transparency and teamwork, and the members of the community may have similar philosophies. This housing type is founded on the sharing economy mostly. That is, the residents will normally have their own bed room and washrooms but share such facilities as cooking and dwelling spaces. Co-living projects reduce the space per capita, the use of vitality, and the generation of waste (Sinha, 2019). This has been achieved by sharing assets and thus reduces natural cost and environmental damages in the context of autonomy, social inequalities, and unproductive customer tendencies (Osborne, 2018). It also provides access to common facilities such as clothes washers, cooking utensils and amusement offices. Close to this, adjacent to the partition of lease and administrations, the average expense of fundamental products of people is reduced (Tariq et al., 2024). In addition, observational analyses indicate that modern co-living enhancements generate flexuous and multifarious networks that enhance social collaboration and provide aggregate assistance (Bothell, 2015). The modern co-living, at that juncture, is increasingly suitable to fulfilling social and social necessities opposed to traditional lodging typologies, and equality and diversity have a special focus (Bhatti et al., 2024). In Pakistan, these challenges have grounded in major urban centers and have implications for all genders (Mukhtar et al., 2024).

Followings are some more pros of co-living:

|           |                                                                                                                        |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>01</b> | Co-living spaces are private living spaces with communal facilities.                                                   |
| <b>02</b> | The idea is to provide the privacy but promoting social contracts through community events.                            |
| <b>03</b> | Sharing of less utilized areas such as kitchen and balcony to make economic rental decisions.                          |
| <b>04</b> | Service providing all-inclusive membership packages while accommodating more individuals on a single floor plate       |
| <b>05</b> | The trend is giving impetus to an organized rental market the same way Co-working spaces did for shared working spaces |
| <b>06</b> | Prohibitive rentals and unavailability of micro units at prime locations.                                              |
| <b>07</b> | Technology driven easy living for the younger generation.                                                              |
| <b>08</b> | Co living draws a thin line between living together but differently                                                    |
| <b>09</b> | Rental charges by these co-living facilities include all the facilities yet are affordable.                            |

**Figure 1: Pros of Co-Living; Drawn by Author**

Co-living and cooperating are practically identical as far as something other than their names. They are each founded on coordinated effort and neighborhood and they adopt a novel strategy to every day exercises, regardless of whether it is the manner by which we live or how we work. Numerous cooperating spaces like WeWork are presently adding co-living to their choices, and a remarkable arrangement of the co-living territories round the world envelop collaborating too. While they are never again the indistinguishable idea, they share key parts that slant nearer to youthful clients. They're also both ready to totally reevaluate the manner in which we expect about working and living.(Dianne Smith, 2014)

**History of Co-Living**

Co-living can be followed back to the birth of societies as reaction to the requirement of safety, security, and social opportunity. As a housing opportunity, it has able to cater cultural and community development, ever-changing economies and an expanding world. In the past co-living were considered as homes away from home for immigrants and other communities especially female oriented. First proper example of Co-living were boarding houses, which were originated in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the mid-1900s, because of an expansion in populace in urban regions "a wealth of living houses opened. Some offered boarding too, with a kitchen and feasting lobby in the storm cellar or on the ground floor." (Durinig, 2014). Motel commonly furnished inhabitants with their own private outfitted room, shared shower, and a feasting room and kitchen with dinners gave by the proprietor or lady(Groth, 1994). Staying houses varied in that they were intended to give settlement without board(common/arranged dinners). All things considered, living houses were intended to be economical lodging and were seen less alluringly(Groth, 1994). During world wars, trend of temporary lodging increased, offering temporary accommodations to working women far from home, and for men stationed in unfamiliar places and such boarding houses acted as framework for modern day co-living. These boarding houses in America offered single specialists a protected spot to remain and two hot dinners daily. They stayed open and working until 1938 when a Multiple Dwelling Law renamed a structure with a common washroom as a Brothel, a move which brought decline in such facilities of co-living.

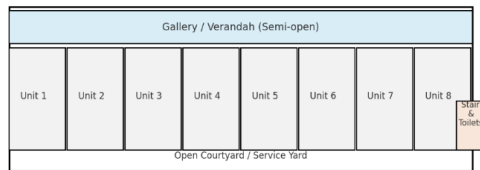


**Figure 2. Life in a boarding house. Image © Esther Bubley, 1943. Courtesy of the Esther Bubley Photo Archive**

If we consider, Asian history with respect to Co-living, the trends of Chawls in India is one of the primary examples. The **chawlis** a distinctive form of collective housing that emerged in India during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly in Bombay (now Mumbai). The chawl developed as a high-density, low-cost, walk-up residential block, typically between 3–5 stories, designed to maximize rentable tenements on a narrow urban plot. Its design is representative of the financial demands of the industrial Bombay, plot restrictions, and the necessity to construct it relatively quickly in order to accommodate migrant workers. These changes led to unprecedented

rural-urban migration, which created acute housing shortages, forcing the building of low-cost, high-density, and fast worker housing. Similar orientation of individual room tenements into a shared passage (gallery / verandah). Each unit is accessible from this corridor. Shared toilets / wash areas are located at either end of the corridor or near staircases. Single-loaded corridors help maximize ventilation and natural light from the “open” side, reducing need for deep plan layouts — a design response to narrow urban plots and low budgets. Because units were extremely small ( $\approx 160$  sq ft), daily life often "spilled" into the corridor: cooking near doors, social interaction, children playing — corridor thus doubled as semi-public domestic space.

Schematic Floor Plan — Typical Chawl (Row of Tenements + Gallery)



Typical Tenement Unit Plan —  $\sim 10\text{--}12$  sqm (Schematic)

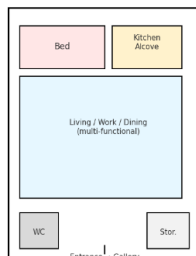


**Figure 3: Typical Unit and Floor Plan of Chawl; Drawn by Author**

Current co-living can be followed back to considerations rising out of Denmark in the 1960s. There was a consensus at the time that advanced lodging couldn't give sufficient prosperity to tenants over their lifetimes, and that '**bofællesskab**' (living network) ought to rather be the focus on future lodging ventures. In 1972, a gathering of families were roused to make the **Sættedammen** co-share, acknowledged by designers Palle Dyreborg and Theo Bjerg. The task is commonly acknowledged to be one of the principal contemporary co-shares (DAVIDSSON, 2017).

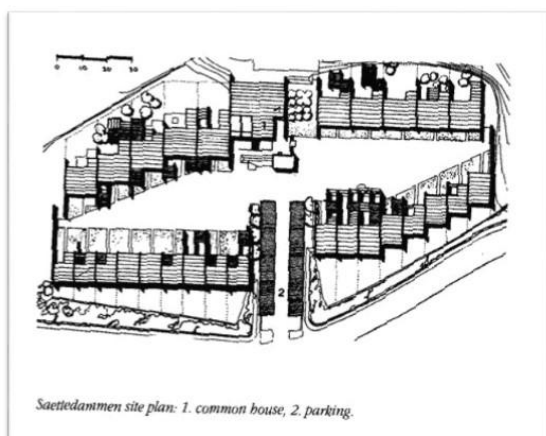


**Figure 4: SAETTEDAMMEN CO-SHARE plan**

(<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/561753753496147636/>)

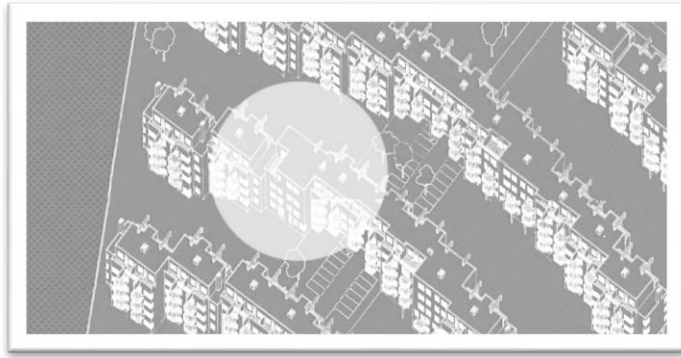


**Figure 5. Amsterdam co-housing showing Kollontai. Image: Anton and Irene**

Another example of co-living project other than boarding houses was Kommunalka, a mass multi residential development project after fall of Russian domain in 1917. In order to oblige work showing up in Soviet urban communities and a declining housing emergency. A project of co-living spaces with two, and up to seven families, sharing a common loft.(Groth, 1994) They were introduced just like 'another aggregate vision of things to come': every family had one private room (which time after time became both their front room, lounge area, and room) and access to shared foyers, kitchen, and restroom and, on the off chance that they were fortunate, a common phone.

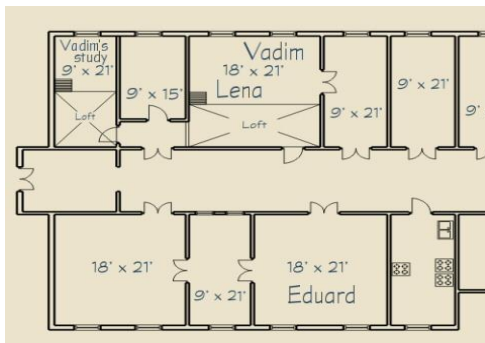


**Figure 6. Partial Plan of Kommunalka**

<http://kommunalka.colgate.edu/cfm/photos.cfm?TourID=820>



**Figure 7. Kitchen in a Kommunalka. Source: <https://maxim-nm.livejournal.com/220812.html>**

Over the years, these houses have largely been replaced by stricter rules and economic and social classes pressures and based on the similarities in form and overarching objectives of the community, there has been a case to suggest that the boarding house is the prototype coliving community and the projects like Kommunalka and Sattdammen are the platform on which fellow

coliving projects are anchored of which three of them were proposed to be discussed on case study basis:

## **Case Studies of Co-Living**

### **Case Study 1: Havemeyer House in New York (Brooklyn), by Common:**

**Introduction:** The ‘Havemeyer House’ is a small-medium sized community located in the Williamsburg neighborhood of the Brooklyn borough of **New York City**. It is a sub-project of Common, which is Co-living providing company having 14 locations across the US.

**Program:** The Common community is comprised of 12 apartments in a 4-building structure (around 20,000 sf) that are linked at the basement area with 51 private bedrooms and an average of 392 square feet per resident. Each apartment is 4-5 bedrooms that are individually rented and have a common kitchen, living area, utility (laundry) and 2 baths.



*Figure 8. Common Havemeyer Lounge Space and Fitness Room*

(source: <https://www.common.com/blog/2016/05/look-inside-havemeyer/>)

**Communal Spaces:** This facility is made up of common spaces that include Fitness Center, two living/lounge spaces, workspace, media room, courtyard with bike storage, and rooftop lounge. The position of the public amenity spaces is accessible and equally far to all members, although they are found in the building basement. The apartment suites are very conveniently located with kitchens, living space and a laundry being shared. Living spaces are equipped with all the furnishings (dishes, etc.). The ratio of baths is 2-3 per bath and they are found directly near the suites of the private ones. Common offers services in various activities.

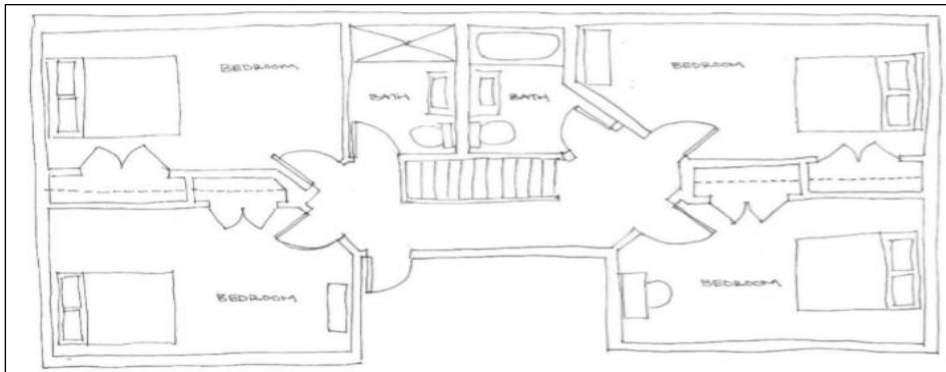


*Figure 9. Common Havemeyer, Typical Apartment Floor Plan Sketch adapted from (<https://www.common.com/havemeyer/>)*

**Private Spaces:** The private zones are close to the secondary ones, and far apart, not to mention the fact that the primary ones are situated in the basement and at the roof of the building. The apartments (kitchen, living, baths) are a secondary, or buffer zone which is shared with the rest 3-4 suitemates. The apartments have fully furnished bedrooms and living rooms. Common offers a private bedroom with a closet, which has a bed/bedding, a nightstand and dresser. The walls of the personal bedrooms are left with hooks so that the residents can place their own art, which gives the residents better control over how their area is customized (DAVIDSSON, 2017).



*Figure 10. Kitchen and Apartment View <https://streeteasy.com/blog/common-adds-new-co-living-units-williamsburg/>*

#### **Case Study 2: R50 – Cohousing Project, Berlin (ifau, Jesko Fezer, & Heide & von Beckerath)**

**Introduction:** An example of the pioneering European model of collectivism in terms of living conditions is the R50 Cohousing Project, which was finished in 2013 in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin. The project was initiated by ifau (institute for applied urbanism), Jesko Fezer, and Heide and von Beckerath based on the tradition of Baugruppen resident-based building groups, who finance, design, and live in multi-family buildings together. R50 questions the traditional residential development paradigm through a collective ownership, participatory design and architectural approaches that encourage long-term affordability and spatial flexibility. The project is a six-story concrete-frame building with its location being next to the old Berlin Wall, which provides an example of a high-density common living incorporated into a full-fledged city.

**Program:** R50 has 19 residential units that are of different sizes that are compact one-bedroom apartments, to huge cluster units that accommodate multi-generational living. The building is arranged with a central access gallery in the middle of each floor and serves both as circulation and as the continuation of a common communal life an attempt to redefine consciously the collective galleries of historic European social. The general layout gives its residents an opportunity to customize internal layouts because non-load bearing partitions also make it possible to reprogram living spaces in the future. Common facilities will consist of a ground-floor community room, a workshop, laundry facilities, a shared garden, and bicycle storage that strengthens the focus of the project on cooperative use and minimized use of the personal territory.



*Figure 11: Shared Space and Roof Top Landscape in the R50 cohousing project, Berlin. (Source: ifau, Jesko Fezer& Heide & von Beckerath, 2013, ArchDaily).*

**Communal Spaces:** R50 with its shared access balconies, which are intended to be semi-public outdoor rooms, is a very strong architectural identity. These galleries promote ad hoc socialization, offer more light and air conditioning to residences, and serve as buffer areas between residential and the community. The communal multipurpose space is large, built on the ground floor and equipped and designed by the residents to share meals, meetings, child care, and cultural events. An outdoor garden and a courtyard managed collectively adds to the social life outside the building envelope and reflects the essence of the projects ethos of environmental stewardship and collective responsibility. The storage rooms, workshops and the laundry are centrally located to maintain day-to-day interaction and joint maintenance practices. All these common areas together act as the social core of the development.



*Figure 12: Shared balcony circulation and interior dwelling space in the R50 cohousing project, Berlin. (Source: ifau, Jesko Fezer& Heide & von Beckerath, 2013, ArchDaily).*

**Private Spaces:** The residential dwelling units are typified by open, loose floor designs that intentionally downplay the use of hard divisions to enable the residents to tailor the interior designs. Majority of units contain extensive living/kitchen areas that face the southern side which maximize the daylight and generate spacious social interiors. Bedroom and personal retreat space are set within the units, deeper spaces to create definite spatial hierarchies between the communal, semi-private and private areas. The abundant consumption of raw material such as exposed concrete,

untreated wood and plain finishing justifies long term flexibility and lessens the cost of construction, which is in tandem with the objectives of the cooperative in terms of affordability. The residents were involved in the design and, as a result, they managed to make sure that the private spaces are determined by the individual needs, as well as the overall sustainability goals.

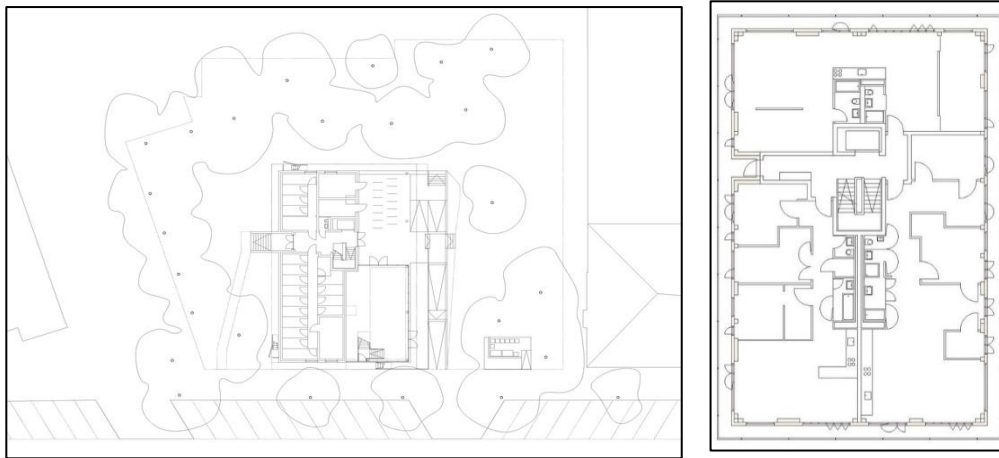


**Figure 13: Plan ifau, Fezer, J., & Heide & von Beckerath. (2013). R50 – Cohousing, Berlin [Architectural drawings and project documentation]. ArchDaily. <https://www.archdaily.com/593154/r50-cohousing>**

### **Economic Aspect of Co-Living:**

The ascent of co-living originates from numerous variables, which incorporates alluring administrations and the satisfaction in living with other people who share comparable interests. In contrast to certain cooperatives, the individuals who choose co-living do never again isolate themselves from the world open air of their living space; they communicate regularly with the world while choosing to remain with similarly invested or like-intrigued people. Its acknowledgment additionally originates from the truth that numerous individuals like to be round others—it's helpful to simply open your entryway and start another fellowship or even a business. Different advantages incorporate a diminished money related weight, network support, bunch exercises, and an encounter of having a place. On a practical level, the charges are shared between all the inhabitants, which can make it a more prominent great worth inclination for a few. The rate you pay for a co-living space will extend depending on the town you remain in, anyway it will persistently be less expensive than common lease. While you might be envisioning a lodging, residence, or nonconformist collective, this model of mutual dwelling is structured with youthful, working experts as a top priority. While it could possibly work anyplace, it stays a basically city style right now, with inhabitants sharing a house, building, or loft.

### **Social Aspect of Co-Living:**

This is something that has end up being an expanding number of important with the atmosphere emergency being at the bleeding edge of political moves the world over. Feasible assortments of lodging, for example, co living, could have an amazing alleviating impact on this atmosphere emergency. The best possible development of co living zones is routinely eco-accommodating; for example, functional and quality condition cordial building materials and home gear are utilized. Two specifically, elective frameworks for warming and electrical vitality age, for example, photograph voltaic boards are progressively more set up, all bringing down the carbon impression. Moreover, less texture and assets all up are utilized during work as the space is built to arrange enormous quantities of individuals as opposed to a home developed for a solitary family.

| CASE STUDY               | LOCATION              | NO. OF UNITS | ECONOMIC ASPECTS                                                                                                                                     | SOCIAL ASPECTS                                                                                                                    | KEY OBSERVATIONS                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Havemayer House (Common) | Brooklyn NewYork, USA | 20           | Flexible leases and shared amenities optimize financial efficiency; micro-units reduce individual housing expenses in high-cost city areas.          | Shared lounges, kitchens, and coworking spaces facilitate networking, social interaction, and sense of belonging among residents. | Designed for young professionals; combines affordability with modern urban lifestyle; community activities integrated into design.             |
| R50 CoHousing            | Berlin, Germany       | 19           | Collective ownership and shared infrastructure minimize living costs and support long-term affordability; flexible unit layouts enable adaptability. | Shared galleries, multipurpose rooms, communal gardens, and workshops enhance social cohesion and multi-generational interaction. | Participatory design ensures residents' needs are met; strong emphasis on cooperative social structure and long-term community sustainability. |

**Figure 14: Comparison of Case Studies; Drawn by Author**

## Conclusion

After research and qualitative analysis, it can be concluded innovations in co-living are very essential as co-living is the new trend of housing and it's increasing day by day. Co-living could be the future of modern housing and these shared communities as it allows the users to have good living standards at a cheaper price. It also increases the social interaction among its user and create a sense of harmony. Furthermore, the case studies conclude that innovations such as App oriented and control living spaces and shared communal area have increased co-living among people specially students and young generations. More innovations in such projects can even more increase this trend. Although this concept is still gaining popularity, it should gain more supporters seeking a freer lifestyle and avoiding urban and other real estate related problems. These innovation could attract more professional towards this phenomena of new housing.

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